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COMMONWEAL

We don't have the '80s to kick around anymore, but FRED SIEGEL gives it one more try

***

CORRESPONDENCE

Betrayal of the faith?

Taylor, Pa.

To the Editors: In your "Challenges Facing U.S. Catholics" [November 17, 1989], Father Andrew M. Greeley points to the clergy's poor quality of preaching. In Greeley's spirit, I cannot withhold indignation for intellectual Peggy Rosenthal's assertion that the Catholic prolife campaign is a logjam in the flow of the wisdom and love of the Holy Spirit. In "provincial" Taylor, Pennsylvania, our parish priests preach that to love thy neighbor as thyself includes our "prochoice" sisters as well as fetuses. Rosenthal's preaching is another example of the Catholic intellectual's betrayal of the faith.

CHARLES J. ORLOSKI, JR.

Tips for preachers

Bailey, Colo.

To the Editors: Among the "Challenges Facing U.S. Catholics: The Next Ten Years" [November 17], my first choice is the adoption of a committed stance on equal rights for women. My second concurs with Andrew Greeley's: improving the quality of preaching.... If we, the laity, are tired of pap and pulp—and we are—then, as Greeley points out, it is our responsibility to demand change.

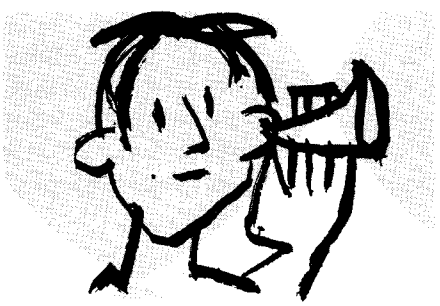
Oscar Romero, martyred archbishop of San Salvador, had much to say that was both wise and practical on the subject of preaching. He understood that "a Christian community is evangelized in order to evangelize." Thus he called for "a preaching that awakens, a preaching that enlightens." To his people he said, "Each of you must be God's microphones, each one of you must be a messenger, a prophet."

In light of Romero's words, bad preaching is indeed what Greeley terms "an injustice." Yes, more serious homiletic training is needed both during and after seminary years. But what other initiatives might our priests and pastors exercise? A few suggestions.

First: Research content. Take up a second collection—of thoughts from the congregation on "what I want in a homily."

Second: Take a risk. Try a dialogic homily. The Trappists at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colo., do this several times a year. The results? Dramatic evidence that the Spirit is not picky about the status or the gender of the individuals to whom she gives a voice.

Third: Read "In the Tongues of Men: Homilies for Women" by Kathy Coffee (*America*, December 2, 1989). Discover



what the other half of your congregation, the women, yearn for in a homily. Do include not just family-focused images of women and men, but ones which speak to the professional, the divorced, the widowed, those who are single by choice.

Fourth: Reflect on *The Violence of Love: The Pastoral Wisdom of Oscar Romero* (Harper and Row, 1988). Examine the content of your homilies in the light of Romero's statement: "Those preachers who avoid every thorny matter so as not to be harassed, so as not to have conflicts and difficulties, do not light up the world they live in...."

Finally: Consider the inclusive pronoun "you," as in, "the church is all of you." Take a risk—and a rest. Invite a member of your congregation to preach!

ANN WALL MILLER

'Reeling but erect'

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: If further evidence were needed that David O'Brien is one of the prime interpreters of the American Catholic past, his splendid article, "Join It, Work It, Fight It" [November 17], would provide the evidence. His threefold approach of republican, immigrant, and evangelical Catholicism is historically valid, for each of the three has exercised and will continue to exercise influence on the development of Catholic thought and actions in the time ahead. Precisely how that will happen, Professor O'Brien has the good sense not to predict, for if there is a more treacherous terrain for the historian to try to venture upon, I do not know which that might be.

I felt a special attraction for the closing paragraph of the O'Brien essay, with its cautious warning against facile prediction and generalization. The historical record of the American Catholic community since 1789 is filled with surprises, e.g., the emergence in a striking way of Catholics' arrival in the mainstream of national life in this last generation. That this "arrival" has proved costly to the faith of many Catholics, I have no doubt. Given the profound nature of the societal revolution that swept through the Republic in the aftermath of the 1960s, one could hardly expect any different result. While recognizing that formidable fact, I feel no deep pessimism about the church's future here. She has seen and survived infinitely worse storms than the one through which she is now

(Continued on page 94)

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COMMONWEAL 65

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STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Production Editor: Patricia Mazzola
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr.
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

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Rediscovering politics

Fanatics have been described as people who can't change their minds and won't change the subject. We are getting to be fanatical about (at least, fans of) Czechoslovakia's Vaclav Havel; as may have been clear from previous remarks in this space, he is currently our favorite prisoner-turned-president, as well as scribbler-become-statesman.

Two contributions to this issue of *Commonweal* helped bring Havel back to mind. Wallace Katz ("The Flawed Triumph of Social Democracy," pp. 77-80) confronts and undercuts simplistic assumptions about the meaning of the ongoing collapse of Communist regimes in the Eastern bloc. It doesn't signal a triumph of U.S.-style capitalism; far more likely are experiments in social democracy on West European models, some of them more productive and many of them far more equitable than ours. Yet, Katz points out, the *societies* molded by social democracy are far from healthy. Like ours, they are oriented far less to community than to consumption, unconcerned with moral meaning or national purpose, bureaucratized and atomized. In a companion article on the decline of public life in the eighties (pp. 75-77), Fred Siegel describes a society, our own, that is "already awash in individualism," where New Age prophets nevertheless prescribe cures for "excessive selflessness," where politics is reduced to horse trading, ethics to health, religion to therapy, and all things are governed by market criteria.

People living under Communist regimes such as Czechoslovakia's endured much worse conditions. But consider Havel's New Year's day speech to his people:

"The worst thing is that we are living in a decayed moral environment. We have become morally ill, because we have become accustomed to saying one thing and thinking another. We have learned not to believe in anything, not to have consideration for one another and only to look after ourselves. Notions such as love, friendship, compassion, humility, and forgiveness have lost their depth and dimension, and for many of us they represent merely some kind of psychological idiosyncrasy, or appear to be some kind of stray relic from times past, something rather comical in the era of computers and space rockets...."

With only a little editing, that passage and others in the same speech could have been addressed to the American people. Would they get a hearing? It can be doubted. When Jimmy Carter spoke of a "malaise" in our society, he drew jeers as an inept politician; optimism sells, he was told, and downers don't inspire. Few debated whether what Carter had said was true and important.

As we've noted before, it is precisely Vaclav Havel's concern for truth, his love *and fear* of language (with Aristotle, Havel holds that words make us human) that make his emergence on the world stage relevant to our situation. Havel approaches politics in the same spirit: wary of it, committed to it. Recently an East German woman was asked by a television interviewer why people were still mounting protest

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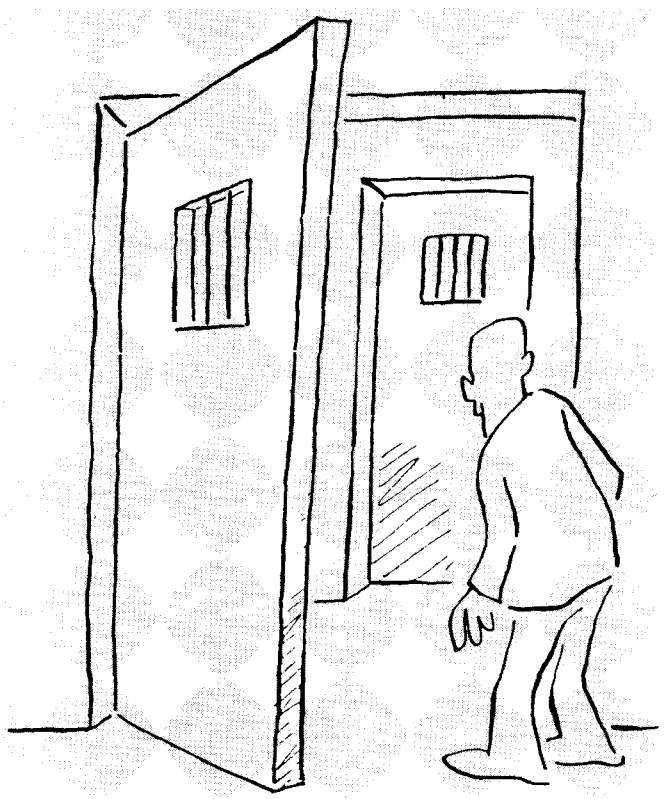
marches when the government had already moved so far toward democratizing itself. "The citizen's first duty," she said, "is distrust." That is a lesson, Havel has said, well taught by totalitarian regimes: "Thanks to this regime we have developed a profound distrust of all generalizations, ideological platitudes, clichés, slogans, intellectual stereotypes, and insidious appeals to various levels of our emotions, from the baser to the loftier."

Our own cultural "regime"—with its atomization, the commodification of every aspect of our lives, and the vulgarizing of our politics—seems to have taught something different; not distrust, leading to watchfulness and participation, but cynicism, and with it passivity, indifference to "the public thing." We have many freedoms but even more distractions; we use our political rights so seldom and so feebly that we have few options. Our pointless proxy war in El Salvador could end; there could be housing for our homeless; the third world's debt burden could be greatly lightened. Not, however, as long as we heed all the gurus (not just Joseph Campbell) who tell us to "follow your bliss."

For Havel, distrust does not justify withdrawal, or indifference, or exclusive self-concern. For him (as, again, for Aristotle) to be apolitical is to be less than human. "Only by looking 'outward,' by caring for things that, in terms of pure survival, he needn't bother with at all, by constantly asking himself all sorts of questions, and by throwing himself over and over again into the tumult of the world, with the intention of making his voice count—only thus does one really become a person." Milan Kundera, writing in the *New Republic* (January 20), says of Havel: "He would prefer to do other things (write plays, for instance, or poetry), to be rid of his destiny, but he cannot. For meanwhile, something mightier than he has seized hold of him, something that goes beyond him, something that Havel calls *responsibility*."



If our own politics is to be redeemed, we need practitioners of whom such things can be said. If we are to have them, we must nourish a recovery (or discovery) of politics as human and humanizing. Aristotle said that political society exists not just to prevent crime and foster exchange, but "for the sake of noble actions." If such notions are to be more than stray relics from the past, we must bring not only integrity and courage to the work but also irony, skepticism, discernment. When eloquence is added to the mix, as in Havel, redemption may cross borders.

STRATEGY TIME II

"As a public official, there is no question in my mind that depriving women of the right to follow their conscience is the same as imposing religious belief." The words are those of Nancy Keenan, state superintendent of schools in Montana and a Catholic personally opposed to abortion. She was defending her prochoice views in response to questions put by Bishop Elden Curtiss after she voiced her position at a rally in Helena last fall (Origins, December 14, 1989). Ms. Keenan's letter was a civil answer to a civil question; in that respect, Bishop Curtiss's letter was a welcome contrast to the one Bishop Leo Maher sent to California Assemblywoman Lucy Killea. Maher put no questions and did not ask an answer; citing Ms. Killea's prochoice position on legislation, he barred her from Communion. Conversation closed. We hope Ms. Keenan and Bishop Curtiss go on talking; and that both of them go on thinking.

Abortion policy is an intellectually and emotionally demanding issue; we need thoughtfulness to understand it, civility to understand one another. These qualities are too often absent from the abortion debate, including that segment of it featuring exchanges between public officials and the bishops. Both Bishop Maher and Bishop Austin Vaughan—who has voiced a public judgment that Governor Mario Cuomo has put himself at "serious risk of going to hell" because of his position on abortion and public policy—may properly be challenged, and not only for the simple pragmatic reason that such statements are more likely to serve "choice" rather than "life." Bishops have a responsibility to teach and even to enforce the moral law; but their office does not confer the power to read souls, or to make apodictic judgments about how a particular moral principle is to be translated into law and public policy.

But those who criticize sweeping pronouncements by incautious bishops ought also to hold lay people to a standard that respects the theological, moral, and political complexities of the times. Given those complexities, it is understandable why many public officials would like to avoid the issue of abortion. But, in one way or another, push *will* come to shove; the issue won't go away. That is why it is essential for public officials to assess with care the consequences of what they say and to

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test out in full the principles that underlie the positions they take. Abortion may present a uniquely perplexing political problem, but the issues it raises—of law and morality, morality and religion, personal belief and public policy—fall into well-mined categories on which both the Catholic and American traditions have much to say.

Return then to the position of Superintendent Keenan. Has she thought through the consequences of her position if it were applied to Montana parents opposed to compulsory education? Were she to enforce the law in such a case, would she be impermissibly imposing the state's and presumably her own moral views on the dissenting parents? What if she were state health commissioner faced with a parental refusal to allow a blood transfusion for a mortally ill child, a refusal based on the parents' religious belief, as Jehovah's Witnesses, that such transfusions are forbidden by God? Wouldn't the commissioner be legally required to seek a court order mandating the transfusion—thereby violating the parents' consciences? When a citizen refuses to pay a certain tax, or to register for military service, are public officials inhibited from enforcing the law because the citizen is acting on grounds of conscience?

The point: we are a nation of laws. The law takes form in legislative acts and judicial decisions; it rises out of precedent, political and ethical reasoning, local and national tradition; ideally, it expresses a shared sense of the common good. Without moral men and women, laws would not be observed. In turn, laws enforce moral views. Ordinarily the views in question are widely shared—against murder, theft, and rape, for example—but not always. Much of the civil rights legislation of the sixties represented the interests of a justly aggrieved minority. But the majority is not always averse to imposing sanctions on a minority: witness the stringent regulation of smoking, or the requirement that motorcyclists wear helmets, laws put in place to control the self-destructive behavior of a few.

Ideally, religious and moral teachers seek to persuade, and so do those charged with enforcing the law. Many laws are based in whole or in part on moral assessments communally made, and without that link between law and morality we would have relatively less observance of either. But, ultimately, law coerces; it is hard to think of any laws regulating behavior that do not in some way (a) narrow our options and (b) derive in some part from ethical/legal/juridical/constitutional judgments of how human beings should act toward one another. Thus it will not do to argue, as Nancy Keenan does, that "depriving women of the right to follow their conscience is the same as imposing a religious belief."

Ms. Keenan is on shaky ground again when she makes her own opposition to abortion into an irrelevancy because it is a "personal religious belief." *All* honestly held religious beliefs are personal, and some have an inescapable bearing on public life. So also when Ms. Keenan depoliticizes her agreement with the church's teaching on the ground that it is the view of "a private Catholic citizen." Any office-holder who tried to enforce Trinitarian views on Unitarians, or impose Christian rituals on Jews, would violate both Constitution and consciences. But not all conscientiously held views are constitutionally protected. And not all ethical judgments that agree with religious teaching are thereby barred from consideration in the public forum.

Abortion is a moral issue about which we can all reason and make judgments, and our conclusions need not depend on a faith commitment. Our current abortion law (embodied in *Roe* v. *Wade*) was written by men who reached a particular philosophic position on the nature of abortion and who applied a particular juridical understanding of constitutional law. On abortion, they were agnostic: we can't know when human life begins. On law, they were libertarian: where there is doubt, let privacy reign. In the view of many, of differing religions and none, these are highly debatable propositions.

And they should be debated—particularly by people with some special responsibility for the common good. One reason is that law teaches right and wrong. In this case, we believe, the law is conveying indifference toward what should be sacred, irresponsibility where there should be care, permissiveness where there should be restraint. Bishop Curtiss asked Superintendent Keenan to consider the impact of her position on Montana's young people, whose consciences may not yet be fully formed. A question that could be put as well to the whole troop of Catholic politicians, like Anthony Celebrezze of Ohio and Nicholas Spano of New York who have searched their consciences and found that, at least at election time, their opposition to abortion has become strictly personal.

It may be the case that public officials cannot rapidly narrow a court ruling that allows 1.5 million abortions a year (and that is far more indulgent to abortion than other countries, including Western liberal democracies). Nontheless, those who are opposed to abortion, or who want to draw the line at a point before viability, can contribute to an honest discussion, can help build a consensus for some modifications in our law, can stop ducking for cover behind the notion that somehow what they believe, and say they believe, about abortion is not fit for public consumption.

ETC

HONING AN OLD SAW An ancient adage, having been deconstructed and then reconstructed in our wordshop, emerges with a new edge: Flattery is the imitation form of sincerity.

FOCUS ON BLACK RELIGION The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is mounting an ambitious project. Funded by the Lilly Foundation, it will document the spiritual dimension of the African-American religious heritage. Churches and religious organizations are being asked to contribute the papers of church leaders; minutes of meetings of boards, trustees, and committees; materials from conferences and outreach projects; photographs; and church architectural plans. A distinguished advisory council has been selected to assist with the collection, including Albert Raboteau (Princeton) and Brother Cyprian Davis (St. Meinrad's Abbey, Indiana). The Center's archives will eventually be accessible to seminaries,

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scholars, and other researchers. Contact: Victor Smythe; Schomburg Center; 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, N.Y., N.Y. 10037.

MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON During a brief shopping tour of Manhattan, a couple of Aussie friends found a pair of jeans being marketed in a tin box, a sort of tea chest. They were labeled "SOVIET" and sported a grey leather, or leather-like, label printed in Cyrillic letters. Also attached to the jeans, an alternative label with similar lettering but colored red, and a small plastic screwdriver for use in changing from one label to the other. Being skeptical, our friends looked closer, discovered that the jeans were made in Hong Kong, and bought them anyway.

REPORT FROM EL SALVADOR

EMBATTLED PARISH

GRINGO MAGI FIND JESUS

The old man who helped the three of us out of the van in front of the Cristo Salvador parish church in the Zacamil area of San Salvador was clearly the caretaker. He found the parish priest, Ron Hennessey of Marykoll, who introduced the old man not as the caretaker but as the father of Octavio Ortiz, one of the early priest-martyrs of El Salvador, a land that has subsequently had many priest-martyrs. When we went forward during the Mass to receive Holy Communion, it was the father of Octavio Ortiz who gave us the bread of life.

In Zacamil it is the presumably unimportant people who do the important things, bringing children into the world, scratching a living out of recalcitrant soil, putting their lives on the line for justice, and dispensing the bread of life.

Even before the recent military offensive in El Salvador, Zacamil was known for its "forward-looking" concerns about the social order—the same sorts of ideas found in Amos, Isaiah, and St. Luke that get their advocates shot by death squads. So when the fighting broke out in November between the government forces and the FMLN, it was a foregone conclusion that the parish of Cristo Salvador would be high on the list of buildings (together with its occupants) that the army would target.

Right on schedule the military came in shooting. The range and erratic character of their aim is enshrined (perhaps permanently, since this is a poor parish) on the walls and roof of the hall that serves as the parish church. The office was entered, its equipment stolen and files destroyed; the reserved Sacrament was spilled, the host ground into the floor; and the portrait of Octavio Ortiz on the rear wall was riddled with bullet holes, as though dying itself were not a sufficient price to pay for one's faith. When an American Jesuit and a Salvadoran church worker arrived with five hundred pounds of corn and medicine for the parish, they were detained; when they were released, all of the emergency supplies for the hungry and wounded people in the war zone had been expropriated.

The military later returned with piles of weapons and crates of ammunition, which they placed prominently inside the church building. Then they took photographs of the cache, which could later be used to "prove" that the people of Iglesia Cristo Salvador had been stockpiling arms for the rebels, were thus Communists, and were thus appropriate targets for permanent disposal by the military. (A further twist on the story is that Jennifer Casolo, who was indicted for allegedly burying arms in her yard for the FMLN, frequently came to services at Zacamil and that members of the parish anticipated that "evidence" of hidden arms in several places she frequented would help pave the way for her prosecution. No use has yet been made of the photographs taken in the church; one conjecture is that they are being saved for use as "evidence" should any priest of the parish later be brought to trial.) The army removed the weapons as soon as the photographs were taken.

After completing the destruction and desecration of the interior of the church, the army left, locking the door with a huge padlock and tacking up a sign that read: "Warning! This Church is Mined."

"We probably won't have a large congregation this morning," Father Hennessey told us, "even though it is Epiphany. Many people are still too frightened to be seen in church as a result of all the shooting. They know there could be either guns or cameras trained on the entrances."

So the three gringos went in to celebrate Epiphany with a congregation that included lots of children but fewer adults than usual. There were several references during the service to these strange-looking "three kings" who had arrived on Epiphany looking for the Christ child. I have a lot of trouble placing myself in a regal role, and one of the parishioners afterward expressed the hope that the "negative kings" from afar of imperialism and domination might be persuaded to leave her land. But I have no trouble at all, and am indeed strengthened by, the notion of going to El Salvador to seek a Christ child who is a "savior," and I must testify that I found him, not in a stable but in a pock-marked church, embodied in the children of 150 of the "despised and rejected" of the world.

The most notable thing about the Mass to me as a Protestant was that in spite of the presence of clergy, the liturgy was almost entirely lay run. Father Hennessey did the consecration, of course, and gave the homily, but the readings, prayers, music (and, of course, "offering"), were all done by lay people, who had been well coached in their parts by a wonderful Catholic sister who works part-time at the parish.

Toward the end of the service, the "three kings" were asked to share some of their concerns with the congregation. We had a translator who gave his own beautiful statement of what it meant to be there, and who was with us partly to facilitate conversation across the language barrier. But when it was time for Arthur McGovern, an American Jesuit, to speak, he did so in Spanish that was much better than he had previously led our group to believe. In the wake of this I made an impetuous decision to try to speak in Spanish myself, an "*Español gringo*" that is much worse than I had previously led our group to believe. At

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this point I received a modest visitation from the Holy Spirit, who empowered me, much to my surprise, to stumble through some remarks about how the original magi had found a child at the end of their journey, and how we modern magi had found children at the end of ours, and that perhaps the epiphany or "manifestation" of God in our time would come through them. Whether they got the drift or not I will never know, but the message is one about which I feel strongly after our visit. Yes, Octavio Ortiz is dead, but what he represented will be transmitted to the children of that parish, and they will grow up with a vision for the future so compelling that the principalities and powers in El Salvador can only feel threatened by it, as was Herod.

And then the Mass was over. But it was not really over. In an important sense it was only beginning, as the people left to engage in the precarious task of translating what happened inside the building to what was going on outside the building. Our initial request to walk around the parish with members of the church was vetoed on the grounds that such an action would endanger the lives of those who accompanied us. But one woman said we *must* go with her to see the Christian cooperative that had been established by people associated with the parish. A five-minute ride in the van brought us to El Paraíso (which means just what it sounds like), a base community that has been nurturing its members for seventeen years with an alternative vision of what life can be, and is incomprehensible without its Christian rootage. ("We may be poor," one of the inhabitants said, "but we have dignity. We know we are all children of God.") Back at the beginning a group of indigent members of the parish realized that the thing they most needed was shelter, and they set about to provide it by starting a small factory for the manufacture of cement blocks, initially financed by church gifts from overseas. Once they had provided houses for themselves, they started selling the blocks, and have been doing so ever since as their basic means of support.

The leaders got into trouble for starting a *cooperativa*, which of course was interpreted by the government as being *communista*, and were forced to flee from the country. But after eight months in exile they returned and remain active in the community. During the recent fighting in El Salvador, the co-op was hemmed in on all sides, and in the random bombing and strafing by government forces, a brother and sister, among others, were both wounded. Their distraught mother was unable to get them to a hospital for eleven hours, due to the unwillingness of the military forces to let them out.

This is almost a parable of what is happening in the country. The real victims are the innocent, the children, those whose lives may be permanently warped by the gruesome experiences of early childhood, experiences supported by the military aid our government provides their government. If that warping is not permanent, it will be in large part because of the love and care and commitment of the extended family that is El Paraíso and Iglesia Cristo Salvador in Zacamil.

ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

Robert McAfee Brown is the author of the forthcoming book, Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology *(Orbis Books), to be published this spring.*

REPORT FROM ROMANIA

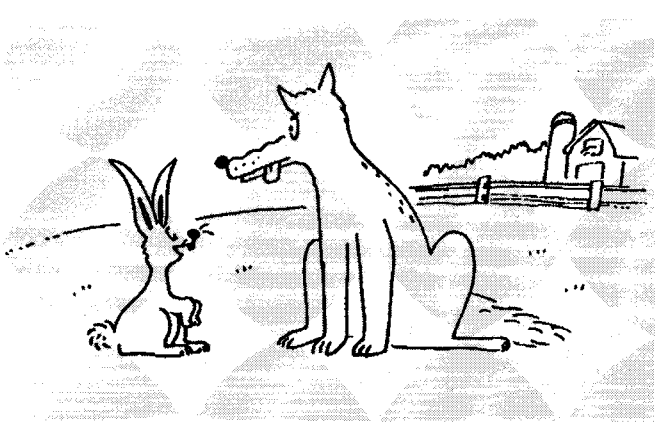
LAND OF BURNING HANDS

NO REFORM WITHOUT REBIRTH

More than any other country in Eastern Europe, Romania lacks the formal and informal institutions needed to lead reform or even conduct systematic inquiries into the casualties of its recent revolution, let alone the abuses of the past. The institutions that might be expected to investigate these events and begin to implement democracy—such as the courts, the press, and the government—are unprepared, and often unwilling, to move forward.

For example, one might expect the newly freed press to be digging around for its own answers concerning the number of those killed leading up to the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime. However, the press has no experience in investigative reporting, and it is not attempting to do any. One editor of a leading newspaper recently defended his paper's lack of aggressive reporting as "a censorship of consciousness—not out of fear, out of responsibility." He continued: "We must extend forgiveness in order to survive. The entire nation is guilty. Our hands still burn from the forced applause. We would have to put half the nation before the firing squad. I'm guilty too; I've been prostituting myself for seventeen years. So I should start with myself, and, frankly, I don't feel like it."

The issue of the society's complicity in the abuses of the Ceausescu regime makes investigations into the recent events more difficult. Neither the local nor the national governments have made the investigation of those killed a priority, on the grounds that they have more pressing issues to deal with. They also claim that they want to stave off a witch-hunt, though it might also be an attempt to avoid implicating themselves. Institutions that played a role in investigating abuses in other parts of the world—church groups, local human rights monitoring groups, and families of the victims—are not yet functioning in any organized fashion in Romania.



"Now let's try a little role reversal. I'll be the predator and you be the prey."

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In Timisoara, for example, most people cite the figure of 3,000-4,000 killed in their city from December 17-22. But where are the bodies of those killed? During a recent mission for Helsinki Watch, our investigation indicated that the casualty figures were indeed high, but that the numbers had probably been inflated. Doctors at one city hospital—one of ten with surgical units in Timisoara—reported that from December 18-21, one or two people died per day in their hospital from gunshot wounds. At the Timisoara Central Hospital, 26 deaths were recorded by December 22. One group of doctors reported that the city's hospitals recorded a total of some 260 people killed throughout the city on the evening of the most intense violence, December 17.

As to the question of where are the bodies of those killed in Timisoara, a few theories have been advanced. On at least one occasion, on the evening of December 19, some fifty corpses were stolen from the local morgue, apparently by the Securitate. In addition, since ambulances were not permitted to circulate in the areas where there was fighting, some reports allege that army vehicles collected the dead bodies. Local army commanders deny this charge, claiming instead that regular trucks may have been involved. Finally, there is speculation that the bodies were cremated at a slaughterhouse on the outskirts of the city.

It has been suggested that the families and friends of those killed should have come forward with inquiries about their whereabouts, which would help lead to some accounting of the dead. But two factors have impeded this: first, no system has been established to encourage those with such information to come forward; and second, the fear and intimidation that existed under the dictatorship has not disappeared entirely with the death of the Ceausescus.

The dozens of bodies found in the mass grave outside Timisoara, though not yet identified, could not have been killed in the fighting, because there was no evidence of gunshot wounds and because coroners have established that the bodies found died from three days to three weeks before December 17. Where those bodies came from and under what circumstances they died is still a mystery.

Similarly, the number of Securitate agents currently in detention is not known. Military and civilian officials claim not to know how many have been arrested, how many released, and how many are being investigated. Based on our investigation, it seems that at least 32 are being held in Timisoara, and approximately 80 in Bucharest, although it is unlikely that all of them will be prosecuted. In addition, it appears that a large number of those arrested in Timisoara—possibly as many as 170—were released due to insufficient evidence.

Even though there is now an opportunity to analyze and publicize the events of December—undoubtedly the most blatant excesses of the regime's power—there is a troubling lack of initiative. The military tribunals that will try the suspected Securitate officers and political leaders are no substitute for a public investigation of the system that enabled such atrocities to be committed in the first place. If Romania is to overcome Ceausescu's legacy, it must begin by accounting for his victims.

JANET FLEISCHMAN

Janet Fleischman is research associate of Helsinki Watch, a New York-based human rights organization.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

'EINIG VATERLAND!'

OLD FEARS & NEW ONES—I

We met accidentally in a drug store, an old friend and I, during those days when East and West Germans were drinking champagne and dancing on the Wall. "What are we doing here?" he asked. "The greatest party in the world is going on in Berlin. Let's get on a plane tomorrow and go!" It was, I thought, a pleasant fantasy. I, too, felt like sharing in that celebration.

My memories of the Wall and the times I had gone through it were vivid. There was the sheer ugly fact of it. The weary sad patience of the women I had met from East Berlin. The young man who took the risk of approaching me in a park one snowy day begging me to take a little gift to a girl he did not hope to see again. I remember the hard-faced guards. Their guns suddenly lifted when tourists came too near. I remember, too, the pathetic mementos and photos marking the deaths of those who had tried to escape from it. To see that Wall surmounted, being hacked at and symbolically destroyed, to *be* there while that happened—I would have liked that.

Last week I had a postcard from my friend. He had gone to Berlin after all and had spent New Year's Eve celebrating on both sides of the Brandenburg Gate—"a great experience." I'm sure it was. But, as I read his card, I realized that my own euphoria had faded.

It had begun to ebb, I realized, when I saw on television thousands of East Germans marching and chanting "*Deutschland! Deutschland!*" and carrying signs calling for "*Einig Vaterland!*" The chant had echoes of the song that had frightened me as a child and frightened me again in young adulthood: "*Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles, über alles in die Welt.*" And to me the word "*Vaterland*" had connotations far different from the concept of "a mother country." It spoke of war. I was somewhat ashamed of this feeling. After forty years could those of my generation not allow a new Germany to exist? Even believe in it?

I was a college student when I began to learn what Nazism was and about the first concentration camps. Like others in academia, I felt utterly betrayed by the country I had learned to respect as the home of Bach and Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller—so many others. Then came the

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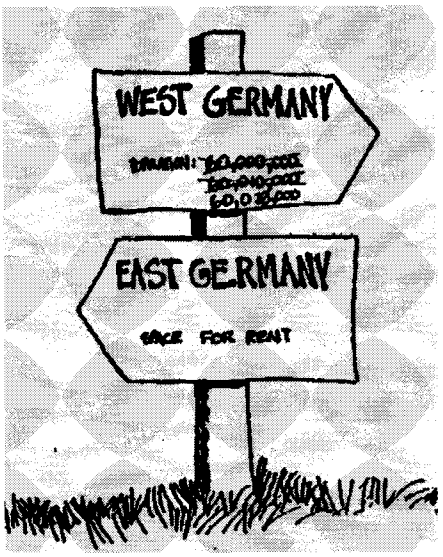

dark days when one country after another fell before Hitler's assaults. And our entry into World War II, followed by the loss in action of friends and neighbors. I taught and lived with refugees from the horror—Christian and Jewish both—and heard their stories. The emotions evoked then easily rise again.

If I, an American relatively untouched, still harbor such feelings what must be the feelings of the Poles, the French, the Dutch, the Danes, all of whom suffered under occupation, or of the English who endured the blitz—or of the Russians who withstood horrible siege at great cost? It is a relief to have the renowned German writer Günter Grass, speaking to other Germans, acknowledge such feelings as "our neighbors' justifiable fears rooted in their own experience." He said further what anyone of us would be reluctant to say—that total reunification must not happen because "no one of sound mind and memory can ever again permit such a concentration of power in the heart of Europe." He continued: "*Neither can we Germans*. Because there can be no demand for a new version of a unified nation that in the course of barely seventy-five years, though under several managements, filled the history books, ours and theirs, with suffering, rubble, defeat, millions of refugees, millions of dead, and the burden of crimes that can never be undone." (Italics mine.)

Grass warns his compatriots that total reunification would mean "despite all our protestations, even well-intentioned ones, we Germans would once again be feared" and that the mistrust of their neighbors would "quickly give rise to a renewed sense of isolation and with it the dangerous self-pitying mentality that sees itself as 'surrounded by enemies.'"

This is the kind of acknowledgment of guilt and of reality which can allay the old fears. Historian Fritz Stern writes that acknowledgment of guilt and implicit or explicit apologies are necessary conditions for a new Europe (*New York Times*, January 14) and cites Vaclav Havel, Czechoslovakia's new president, for his magnanimous call for apology to the innocent Germans expelled from his country after World War II. "How each country, including ours, deals with the past—neither succumbing to exaggerated guilt nor angrily indulging in amnesia—will bear upon the psychological strength of the world now being built."

There are other arguments against total reunification that have nothing to do with our old fears. And some of them have to do with our own fall from moral grace in the decades just past. Leaders in the East German freedom movement have warned against the seduction of the overwhelming materialism of the West. The pope warns Eastern Europe against blindly embracing all the values of our Western democracies, warning about the spread of "counter-values like egoism, hedonism, racism, and practiced materialism."

Günter Grass argues that if West Germany is to subsume or annex a smaller East Germany, that country's hard-won new identity—its heroic struggle for freedom, its own brief history—would sink away. He points out that the struggle for freedom in the GDR is something new under the sun—the East Germans are razing the bastions of a hated system by nonviolent means. This is an event "unique in German history—a successful revolutionary movement."

What has happened in the rest of Eastern Europe is unique as well. The leaders there—the likes of Walesa and Havel—have a moral authority Western leaders have lost. If we help them, a confederation of the two Germanys, drawing on the best in each, can eventually join a larger European confederation, open to all of Europe. This should allow for the orderly sequence called for by Senator Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) in his January 10 speech, on the anniversary of Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, "a sequence during which East Germany could develop democratic institutions and the two Germanys could expand economic and social interaction." In the face of such a Europe we may then come to terms with the flaws in our own recent past—Vietnam, our murky ventures in Central and South America, racial hatred and poverty here at home. There are other fears than the old ones. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

NATIONALISM'S SIREN CALL

OLD FEARS & NEW ONES—II

Who would ever have imagined that the Soviet Union might be in danger of falling apart?

Well, Milovan Djilas, for one. Djilas, you remember, was Tito's friend and comrade-in-arms during the partisan struggle against the German occupation in World War II; in the postwar period he was vice-president of Communist Yugoslavia and one of the chief architects of Tito's successful revolt against Stalin in the late 1940s; he then became a critic of communism, even the Titoistic brand, and was rewarded for this insight with many years imprisonment; he was the author of, among other works, *Conversations with Stalin* and *The New Class*, a critique of communism that caused a great sensation when it came out in the mid-1950s.

Years ago Djilas predicted that the cen-

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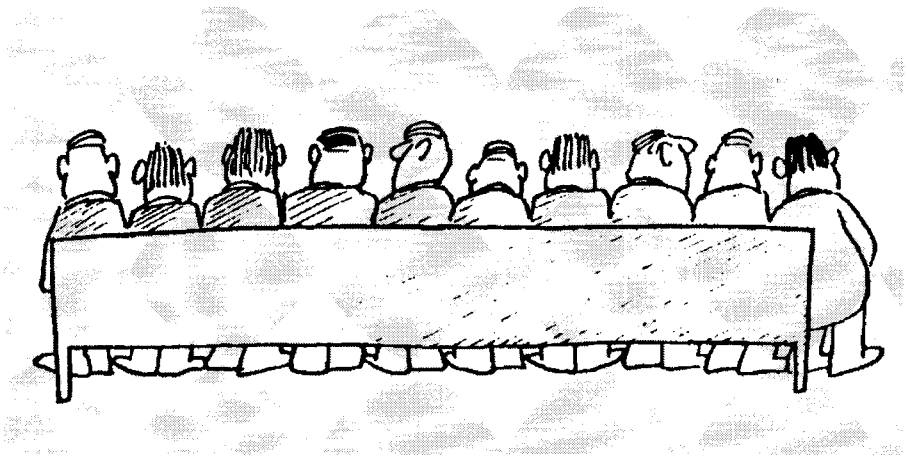

trifugal force of nationalism would eventually endanger the very existence of the Soviet Union. He made the same prediction for his own multinational Yugoslavia. I fear Djilas was correct. I don't see how Gorbachev can have *glasnost* along with the continued existence of the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's hope, apparently, had been that a more liberal, more democratic Soviet Union would energize individuals, groups, and institutions so that they would become vastly more productive than they had been in recent decades. This increased productivity would eventually permit the Soviets to catch up with the Western nations, to become a fully modernized society. This is the latest version of the dream of westernization that has fascinated Russian rulers since the time of Peter the Great, nearly three centuries ago. But every time the Russians make progress in this direction, the West, it turns out, makes further progress, and the goal of catching up remains almost as distant as ever.

It was not difficult to predict that once the conditions and instruments of liberal democracy were presented to the numerous non-Russian national groups in the Soviet Union, these groups would seize the gift, not in order to work harder in their farms, factories, and offices, but to assert national independence. Maybe they will work harder and more efficiently once they get independence. But nationalism is more attractive than hard work. When people are free to choose one or the other, they'll choose the former.

For at least 200 years, since the age of the French Revolution, nationalism has been an enormous force in the world, an intoxicating force. It has redrawn the map of the world time and again; it created modern nation-states; during the nineteenth century it extended European dominion over much of the rest of the world; in the twentieth century, rebounding, it led the rest of the world to overthrow the same European dominion; it has presided over the industrialization of the earth; it has led to recognition of the rights of man and the citizen; it has also led to brutal totalitarianism. It has given us enormous prosperity; it has also given us World War I and World War II, not to mention the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, the bad angels that presided over its birth.

After two centuries of playing with this intoxicant, Western Europe shows signs at last of being able to handle it with moderation. Slowly, ever so slowly, the nations of Western Europe creep toward confederation. They have a popularly elected, though of course very weak, parliament that meets in Strasbourg; they have an economic union that will be significantly strengthened in 1992. Their long-term goal seems to be nationalism in moderate doses: just enough to preserve a comfortable sense of pride and identity in Europe's constituent parts, but not so much as to disrupt the advantage of transnational order and cooperation.

But why can't Gorbachev do the same? If the Western European states can ascend from anarchy to confederation, why can't the Soviet Union descend from a unitary state to a confederation? Why can't the two processes—increasing centralization in the West, increasing decentralization in the East—meet one another halfway? Why indeed, can't this double process eventually lead to a pan-European federation, embracing west, east, and center?

Something like this is what Gorbachev appears to have in mind. In his appeals for patience to the non-Russian nationalities, he promises that the Soviet Union will be transformed from what it has been, a de facto unitary state with a federal veneer, into a genuine confederation—though he is still short on specifics. And of course he speaks of "a common European house, from the Atlantic to the Urals."

But there is a crucial difference, I fear, between the nationalism of the West and that of the East. The Western Europeans have been free to have their fling with nationalism; they've sown their wild oats; they've come home drunk at three in the morning and been sick all the next day. You don't have to read them lectures on the dangers of excess; they know all about it; they've been there. Through pain they have learned wisdom. But the nations of the East, particularly the non-Russians of the USSR, are still young in nationalism; they haven't had their fling; they haven't been allowed to go out on the town and live riotously. Their more experienced brothers and sisters can tell them national independence isn't all it's cracked up to be. They can tell them that Gorbachev's offer of confederation, as opposed to outright independence, is generous and wise. They can tell them that when it comes to national independence, half a loaf is not only better than none at all—it's even better than a whole loaf.

Unfortunately, we grow too soon old and too late smart. It's not easy for young people to benefit from the wisdom their elders have gained in the college of hard knocks. The young want to have their own experience, commit their own follies, bang their own heads against the wall. The nationalism of Western Europe is now mature; it has grown ripe and mellow. The nationalism of the East, alas, is in its exuberant adolescence

To date Gorbachev has been a great political miracle worker. If he can handle this problem, if he can hold the Soviet Union together within a federal framework while continuing to pursue his program of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, then he will be one of the great political miracle workers of all time. □

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BLISSED OUT & LOVING IT

THE EIGHTIES & THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC LIFE

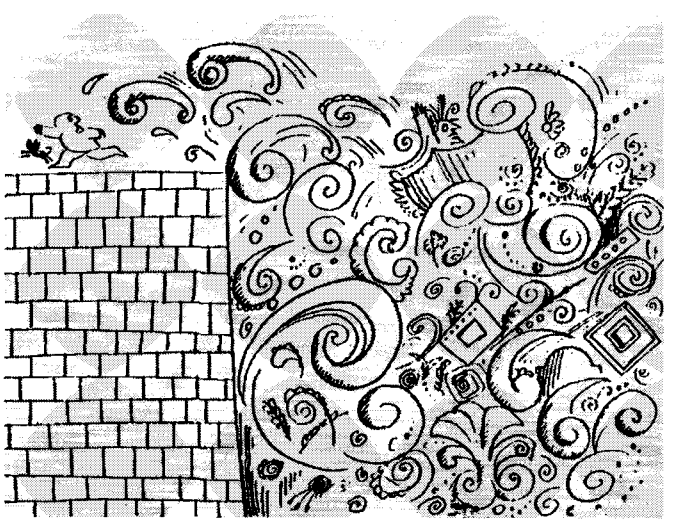
FRED SIEGEL

The past forty years of U.S. history can be divided into periods which were either modern, that is, euphoric about technology and the progress it delivered, or countermodern, that is, haunted by the price paid for "progress." Roughly speaking, the "fifties" (the period from 1948 to 1963) was modern. Well before Eisenhower set the dominant political tone, the decade was defined by the promise of plastics, pesticides, penicillin, and polio vaccine, with televisions, freezers and washing machines thrown in for the average home. By contrast, the "sixties," from Kennedy's assassination to 1978, focused on paying the environmental price for the plastics and pesticides, and the biological one for overdosing on penicillin, while recoiling at the widespread prosperity and mass culture that were producing "plastic" people. The classic sixties challenge to "progress" asked: "How is it that we can put a man on the moon, but can't eliminate poverty?" The eighties—I skip the "seventies" because culturally speaking it didn't happen—brought a return to the romance of progress. The personal computer and the fax transformed the office while the VCR and the microwave reordered family life.

Perhaps no countermodern theme was more telling in the sixties than the critique of work in a mass production society. Work, said the countermodernists, robotized people. The "creative" people, the nonconformists, expressed themselves through their art, or what has since become indistinguishable from it, their lifestyle. By the early eighties the terms of exchange between work/economic individualism and art/bohemian individualism were reversed. While the desublimated sixties produced little in the way of compelling art or literature, in the hard-driving eighties, personal computers and the adventurous capitalists, who produced them, reinvested work with the aura of creativity. The deepest strand of American culture, its radical individualism, now found its outlet in the return of the pre-New Deal hero, the entrepreneur. Moreover, the newly enriched of the eighties lived out one of the themes of the late sixties: "If you've got it, flaunt it."

By the late eighties a small industry had developed, devoted to celebrating the sixties by reasserting the supremacy of innocence over experience. After Abbie Hoffman's suicide, there were earnest testimonies to the man's wit and wisdom. The drugs, the moral gaucheries—"if people only knew what communism really was they'd get down on their knees and beg for it"—were airbrushed out. Hoffman, like Huey Newton (murdered at the hands of the drug-dealing thugs he trafficked with) was part of the chorus that had called for an end to bourgeois society. And to a frightening degree their wish has come true. The proliferation of drugs, crime, unmarried mothers, and the mentally ill wandering our streets testifies to a moral deregulation whose effects are all too clear. The innocence industry notwithstanding, the plagues of the eighties cast a retrospective shadow over the glories of the Aquarian age.

A self-described "sixties radical" who had entered medicine for the best of motives described the change to me: The staff in the New York hospital emergency room where he works divides the world between the violent druggies—the "rude, mean, narcissistic dirtballs" who return again and again to the emergency room crowding out the other patients—and the "citizens"—people who do not use drugs. Still, the Woodstock nation has not been without its legacy. In the eighties we began to make the



FRED SIEGEL, *who covered the 1988 presidential campaign for* Commonweal, *is spending the year at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.*

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best of our narcissism by marketing it around the world through rock videos and teen movies. It was one area where the U.S. economy could still compete.

The transformation of the term yuppie into an epithet was a belated recognition that radical chic might not have been all that it was cracked up to be. Though tarnished, the Aquarian ideal, consistent as it is with America's underlying fascination with the care and grooming of the self, took on a new life in the eighties. The sixties encounter group has been institutionalized and televised. The catharsis that once required months or even years of therapy is now compressed into an hour and televised four, five , six times a day on shows with Phil, Oprah, Geraldo, and Sally, not to mention their radio imitators.

In a society where therapy had already replaced religion as the source of solace, health has now replaced ethics as the measure of morality. It is your job to feel good about yourself, regardless. The higher selfishness was given elaborate justification on PBS's most popular series of the decade, "The Power of Myth." The programs' host, Bill Moyers, wrapped the ideas of the right-wing misanthrope Joseph Campbell in a mantle of respectability. Campbell's mythmaking, a somewhat more sophisticated version of what in *Star Wars* was called "the force," served up a mismash of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Jung, and Eastern religions. Campbell spoke out against the finicky concerns of an ethical life as a hindrance to experiencing "the rapture of being alive." Campbell's message, strikingly congruent with the economics of Reaganism, was "follow your own bliss." Follow it, that is, into your own private utopia.

For many Americans that private utopia has consisted of a walled and gated condominium community sealed off from the disintegration around them. For others it is the flight into "romantic" love; what remains of adult culture is suffused with movies and songs about little else. Romance, said Michael Ignatief, became, during the eighties, a mass industry. "We may no longer believe in justice or democracy because these imply an actor called 'society' whose identity is continually fragmented. But we do believe in the right to love." Love was the last remaining utopia. Love, with its emphasis on the unique and the uncommunicable, has always been gloriously antisocial, but never before was it so fractious. Under the new norm—the marriage of uncertain duration—romantic love between individuals has been pitted against self-love and generally lost. For an increasing number of people it is no longer possible to be both faithful to oneself and married.

In a reworking of the old Protestant scheme of the self-made man and the self-saved soul, self-healing became popularized. New Age medical gurus explain that cancer is really only a form of cellular despair. If you have willed it, you can cure it. On the other hand, if you fail, you have only yourself to blame. But don't feel too bad, under another variant of medicalized morality you can always join one of the proliferating therapy groups, which grew as rapidly in the 1980s as Protestant sects had in the 1840s. There were groups for people afflicted by not only drugs and alcohol, but negativism (negaholics), shopping (shopaholics), sex (sexaholics), video games (videoholics)—you get the idea.

Bizarre as it may seem in a society already awash in individualism, the primary message of many of these groups has been that people suffer from an excess of selflessness. The country needed to be taught self-love. And one way to achieve the self-love is to cut yourself off entirely from your past, "by healing the child within," that is, eliminating the middleman and "reparenting" yourself. This time, of course, the job will be done right.

Whatever else it did, such popular therapy seems to have had the effect, justified or not, of making people feel better about themselves. Poll after poll indicates that while Americans thought the country was going to hell in a handbasket, they personally are doing just fine, maybe even better than ever. Other polls show that while people see a widespread moral breakdown going on around them, their own private satisfaction is at an all-time high. Reagan and Bush have of course contributed to the sense of well-being by financing record levels of consumption on a mountain of debt, a foundation every bit as shaky as self-cures for cancer. What defined the decade culturally, then, was a temporary truce between bourgeois and bohemian individualism as they joined together in a celebration of private life. Politically the odd men out in this truce have been the cultural conservatives on the right and the economic egalitarians on the left.

One of the reasons for Bush's enormous popularity to date is that he has not only nurtured this truce, by gently backing away from the conservative cultural agenda, but he has tried to turn the truce into the permanent basis for the Republican future. Abortion is of course the flash point in all this. While it is by no means clear that Bush will be able to negotiate those shoals, his top political strategist, Republican National Committee Chair Lee Atwater, has been laying out a rhetorical strategy designed to do just that. Atwater, a self-described "libertarian good old boy," skirts the abortion issue by telling audiences that he has "an obsession with individual freedom." In short, he tries to outflank the abortion issue without directly offending right-to-life voters.

It is this truce, this lull in the war of the competing individualisms, which has allowed analysts like Francis Fukuyama to talk in Hegelian overtones about the triumph of the West and "The End of History" (*The National Interest*, Summer 1989). The liberation of Eastern Europe is truly a world historical event worth celebrating. But its glow has obscured the cracks within our own realm, or what Daniel Bell has called the cultural contradictions of capitalism. Fukuyama's inspiration, Hegel, was prescient about the centrifugal dangers of an asocial, amoral individualism. For instance, he thought marriage begins in contract, but that it is precisely a contract to transcend the standpoint of contract. The family, he argued, was where the individual learned the altruism necessary for public life. If so, given a divorce rate unprecedented in the history of the world and the high cost paid by the children involved, we can expect public life to continue to decline.

One sign of that decline is that, as the political philosopher

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Thomas Spragens notes, politicians and activists have largely given up the discipline of trying to persuade one another. Instead, assuming in the manner of the market that personal preference is all, they simply indulge in horse trading. Unlike our European and Asian counterparts, we seem to have largely given up, at least domestically, on the idea of shared national purpose.

In Europe and to an even greater extent, Asia, the promise of technology has flourished in societies that have retained a considerable degree of their premodern cohesiveness. America, by contrast, has placed its bets on a modernity so thoroughgoing that individuals are almost as mobile as the cash flow that drives our economy. I'm not optimistic as to how the competition will turn out. A country that has forgotten where it came from is not well equipped to decide where it is going. □

THE FLAWED TRIUMPH OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

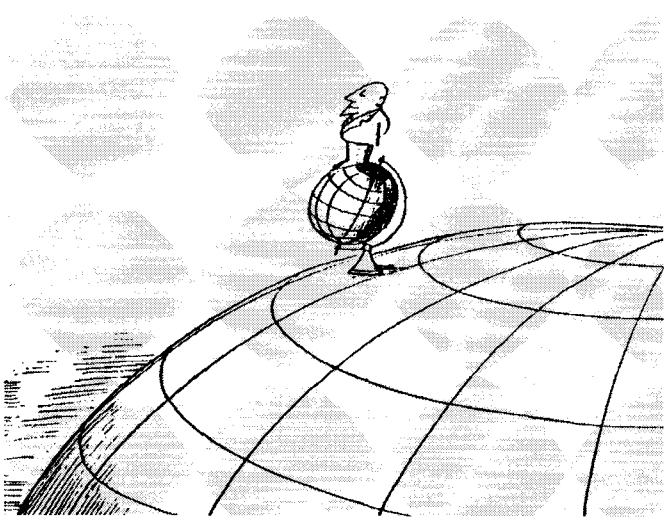
CAPITALISM ISN'T WINNING, HISTORY ISN'T ENDING

WALLACE KATZ

Back in 1848, Karl Marx wrote, "a specter is haunting Europe, the specter of communism." With *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, and with the actual or potential creation of non-Communist governments in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, and Poland, Marx's specter is finally disappearing. Surely a significant historical event, but not one which is yet clearly understood.

Because liberal America has been the constant foe of the Soviet Union and its satellite states in the Warsaw Pact, recent events appear to confirm two assumptions: first, that the death of communism means the triumph of liberal capitalism; and second, that the victory of liberalism and the survival of only one idea of government signify an end to ideological disputes and the beginning of an era in which the problems of international conflict will be reduced to devising technical solutions to technical problems (this is the argument of Francis Fukuyama in "The End of History," *The National Interest*, Summer 1989). The irony here is that the death of communism means neither the triumph of liberalism nor a Hegelian "end to history," but rather an outcome that the young Marx of the 1844 manuscripts might well have welcomed, that is, the triumph of social democracy.

Look at the facts. From the Iberian Peninsula to the steppes of Siberia, continental Europe has already become or is becoming the realm of social democracy—nations where a "mixed" political economy with democratic freedoms, markets, and state planning coexist with full-scale welfare programs. At present, Spain, Portugal, and France are ruled by Democratic Socialist governments, as are the Scandinavian countries of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. The Benelux nations—Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg—alternate between Socialist and Christian Democratic governments; or, like the Netherlands, shift among governing coalitions in which Social Democrats figure prominently. Austria is perennially Social Democratic, even with the likes of Kurt Waldheim in the largely honorific office of president. Local government in Italy is dominated either by a reformist Communist and/or Social Democratic party, and the national governing coalition in Italy is composed of Christian Democrats and Socialists. The Italian Communists, long prohibited from membership in the endless coalitions that form governments in Rome, are changing their name; they want to be seen as social democrats so that they, too, can serve in a government and control cabinet ministries. Greece has just ousted a socialist government, but primarily because of its long tenure in office and the quirky and perhaps corrupt behavior of Premier Andreas Papandreou. The Federal Republic of Germany has a Christian Democratic majority in the Reichstag and, accordingly, a nonsocialist chan-



WALLACE KATZ, *president of Community Business Consultants, a Washington consulting firm specializing in political research and economic development, is author of the forthcoming book:* The Politics of the Public Sphere: Growth and Democracy in Postindustrial America.

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cellor. But West Germany also has the largest and strongest Social Democratic party in Europe; a small crisis could topple Chancellor Kohl's weakly supported rightist coalition and bring the Socialists once again into power.

Make no mistake about it, the once Communist nations of the Warsaw pact will not relinquish the dogmas of Lenin and Stalin for those of Horatio Alger, George Gilder, Ronald Reagan, and the Heritage Foundation. If Gorbachev makes it and *perestroika* and *glasnost* prevail in the Soviet Union, the other Warsaw Pact nations of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Poland will have representative democracy—free elections, multiple parties—and religious toleration. But they are likely to follow the lead of Western Europe with social-democratic or "mixed" economies. There will be market allocation of goods subject to the law of supply and demand, but the political economy will be one in which state intervention will loom large in the form of strategic planning, targeted economic development, and industrial policies. The state will continue to provide the citizenry with an array of social welfare benefits—unemployment insurance, child care, pensions, socialized medical and health care, income policies, labor market and full employment policies, disability insurance, and public housing.

The European Economic Community (EEC) is currently wrestling with how to maintain, harmonize, and extend the varied social benefits in each of its member nations while building a unified European market economy by 1992. This is more difficult than it might seem. Even though all the nations of continental Europe have extensive social benefits, uneven economic development in southern Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece has created less benevolent welfare programs than those in more prosperous France, West Germany, Denmark, and the Benelux countries. The gradual addition of the now-liberated but generally backward nations of Central and Eastern Europe to this integrated market will heighten the problem.

In addition, there is the sensitive political task of wedding the social democracies of continental Europe to Margaret Thatcher's liberal capitalist England. For a decade now Mrs. Thatcher has done her best to wrench Great Britain away from the welfare socialism of Attlee, Bevan, and Wilson or the kinder and gentler Oxbridge-inspired Tory socialism of her immediate Conservative predecessors, and toward something approaching what the French call *le capitalisme sauvage* of the United States. She has not destroyed socialized medicine or the dole, but to the extent that she could, she has "privatized" what the socialists nationalized, cut the progressive income tax, provided incentives for businesses, turned public housing back into private housing, and striven to rebuild the English middle class. But the advantages of the EEC's integrated market are more than even the "Iron Lady" of Downing Street can withstand; if recent polls are accurate, the Thatcher era will soon be over. Thatcher's successors, whether Labor or Tory socialists, will revert to form, and Britain, like the rest of Europe, will return to the social-democratic fold.

And hard as it may be to imagine, across the Atlantic, in the U.S., the heart and home of liberal capitalism, the "withering away" of communism in Central and Eastern Europe may also bring about the triumph of social democracy. Whether the Republicans stay in power or the Democrats succeed them, the presidents after George Bush are unlikely to have the threat of Soviet hegemony in Europe to marshal against institutional reforms and redistributive budget priorities. The defense budget could be reduced by perhaps as much as 60 percent (the cost of war preparedness for land battles in Europe), freeing up billions of dollars for priorities other than troops, tanks, and missiles. Even if all this money is not used for the welfare and benefit of the poor; even if some is spent on reducing the deficit, rebuilding the infrastructure, targeting special areas for economic development, as well as on further entitlements for the middle class and the rich, there will be plenty left over in the next decade and thereafter to create a full-scale social welfare system in the U.S. equivalent to those in Scandinavia and West Germany—both of which, it should be noted, spend more per capita than the U.S. on public and social services, yet regularly outperform us on every indicator of economic growth and productivity. Full-scale welfare will mean a social support system of generous proportion, sufficient to reach into the slums and as far as the vast numbers of minorities and the structurally unemployed underclass and working poor, while providing benefits for middle-class families such as child care, and training for new careers, along with industrial adjustment policies.

But even if social democracy rather than liberalism has triumphed, could Fukuyama still be right: Have we come, with the victory of social democracy, to the end of history? Many socialists, in contrast to neoconservatives such as Fukuyama, would gladly accept the victory and leave it at that. But the same trenchant criticism leveled at Fukuyama—that liberal capitalism with its many faults and contradictions could hardly be the end of history—could also be made of social democracy. Social Democratic regimes in Western Europe (and ultimately perhaps in Eastern Europe) have many problems that cannot be resolved by more technological progress or evenhanded economic growth; they will certainly not yield to mere tinkering or technical fine tuning. Even the best of these regimes are rife with contradictions of a racial, cultural, and moral nature.

The triumph of social democracy will not resolve age-old racial, religious, or cultural animosities: for example, between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; Walloons and Flemish in Belgium; Northern and Southern Italians; Basques and Spaniards; Prussians and Bavarians; Caribbean blacks, Pakistanis, Indians, and the British in the United Kingdom; North Africans and the French; and impoverished and downtrodden Southern and Central European laborers working in all the advanced nations of Western Europe. And, last but not least, the triumph of social democracy will not spell an end to the single most intractable problem of U.S. society—racism.

Nor will its triumph resolve the larger cultural contradictions of social-democratic systems. Social Democrats quite naturally affirm their interest in creating societies that are economically

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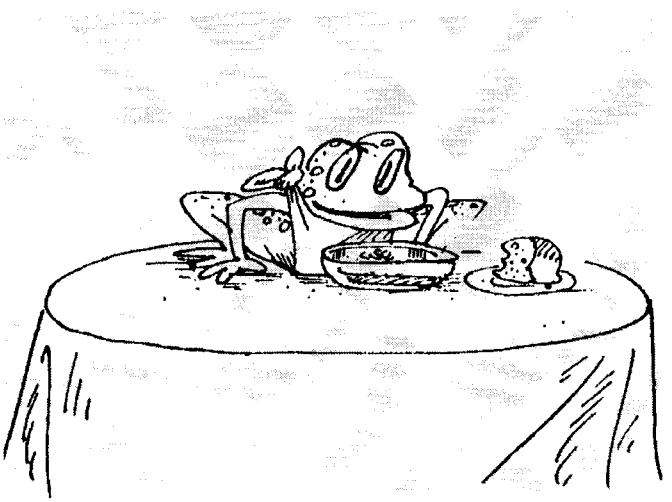
viable, efficient, and reasonably democratic and egalitarian. In fact, the social-democratic systems of Western Europe, for the most part, have succeeded in creating societies where equality is measured by consumption, where representative democracy means political passivity, and where freedom and individuality are unhappily confounded with individual and social narcissism and irresponsibility. Social democracy has likewise failed to overcome the "alienation" that socialists understandably prefer to identify with liberal capitalism: in Scandinavia as in America one sees the gradual attrition of institutions like the family and the community that mediate between market and state, and the concomitant growth in bureaucracy.

In most social-democratic systems, equality does not mean equal access to political and economic power, but rather the ability of all to consume. In social-democratic societies as in the liberal capitalist U.S., the individual is too frequently atomized in his or her private life, taken up solely with the pleasures of consumption, devoid of interest in political participation, and content to passively register yea or nay to citizenship via electoral contests that more closely resemble public relations campaigns or media "opportunities" than politics.

Academic Marxists in the U.S. and elsewhere decry markets that reduce everything—all use values—to exchange values and commodities. But the very same people are silent before the equally corrosive effect of the social-democratic welfare state whose very benefits, when "delivered" to atomized individuals, obviate the need for family, church, trade union, community, and all the other mediating institutions that once, even in the midst of nineteenth-century entrepreneurial capitalism and its "satanic mills," enabled people not only to survive but to find human warmth, solidarity, occasionally fraternity—in short, the wherewithal with which to transcend the harsh and impersonal utilitarian calculus of the Gradgrinds and Podsnaps.

The welfare state, while making us less dependent upon private charity and philanthropy, has loosened our sense of responsibility for and to each other. It breeds individual narcissism and callousness: we all live our own "life styles," behind the walls of condominium "communities." Worse yet, it encourages social irresponsibility: because the state takes care of the poor and downtrodden, because they too can consume and watch television, the middle and upper classes need not be concerned with such goods as social integration, interaction, harmony, or national purpose.



"Oh great—there's a fly in my soup."

The welfare state, with its vast and always growing bureaucracy, takes care of everything and everybody with, we hope, efficiency and competence. Sometimes, of course, so much power in the hands of so few ends in corruption. But even when bureaucracy runs smoothly and for the benefit of all, bureaucratic rationality is no substitute for the vitality of a democratic culture—for public work, critical discourse and debate, and engaged and energetic social interaction. Social thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, Alasdair Macintyre, and Alan Wolfe would argue that while the social-democratic welfare state has provided its citizens with abundant material goods and social benefits, it has not solved the riddle of modernity: how to create a society at once efficient and civilized, egalitarian and fraternal, and abounding in individual freedom, yet characterized by moral and social responsibility.

There is no "end" to history. Even social democracies have unfinished business that, if it is to be completed, will require precisely the kind of critical ideological debates, moral analysis, crises, and conflict that Fukuyama's spurious neoconservative thesis belies. Yet, there is, as Hegel observed, "reason in history." We have entered into a new era of social development; its name is not important, call it "postindustrial," "postmodern," whatever you will. The hope of this new era, and perhaps its "reason," is a convergence between the exigencies of a global economy and the moral and cultural desiderata of the human spirit—in other words, a rough correspondence between what is needed for economic development and what is needed for the creation of a good society.

A full description of how we might or should proceed from the "great society" of present social democracies to the good society of the future is beyond the scope of this short article. But for now, three observations can at least lay the groundwork.

First, those on the Left must comprehend that the elimination of poverty or the achievement of relative equality is not the end but the means to a satisfactory human existence. The Left must understand and learn from classical conservatism about the importance of mediating institutions, religion, moral and social responsibility, culture, and the fallacies of the utilitarian calculus, whether Bentham's or Rawls's. As a small but significant segment of the underclass in our great cities demonstrates daily, it is possible to feed, clothe, and house people but leave them without the rudiments of moral understanding or civility. To say this is not to blame the victim, but to indict the Left and social democracy for its persistent moral and cultural obtuseness: the problems we face are as much moral and cultural as social and economic.

Second, and even more important because of the great concentration of power involved, the Right—the top managers of corporate capitalism—must understand and act on the principle that both their long-term interests and their social responsibilities

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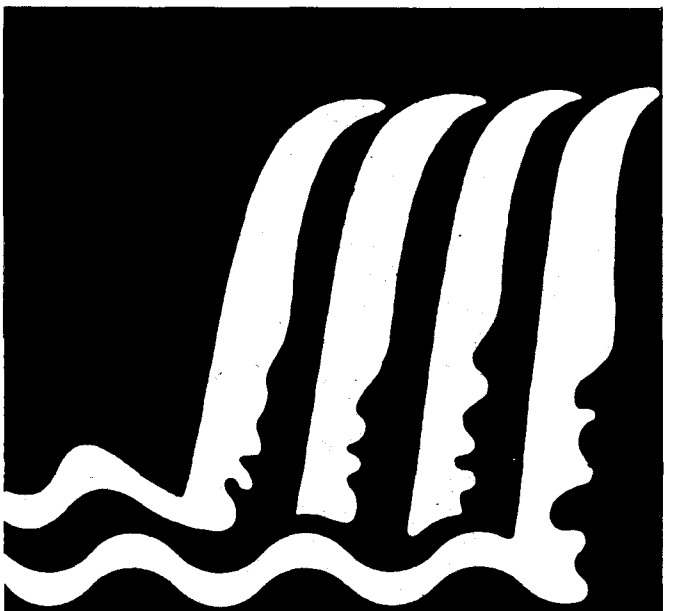

Wellspring*

*"THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE SUCH A WELLSPRING OF THOUGHT & INSPIRATION THAT THEY CANNOT BE GIVEN UP."

—JUDITH P. WAGNER ON *COMMONWEAL*. CORRESPONDENCE, JANUARY 26, 1990

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extend beyond the world of shareholders and stakeholders, beyond employees, owners, and the managers themselves. A great corporation is much more than private property or a machine for profit and job creation. The great multinational corporations must understand and act upon their responsibility to their local communities, to the nation, and to society-at-large. They must learn to pay their fair share for education, housing, community revitalization, infrastructure, social and public services, and the protection of the environment, for those things which, in the old liberal system, were described as "externalities," "market imperfections," or "the social costs of production."

The third observation takes a page from Tocqueville with his emphasis on the critical importance of local institutions. Though we are gradually coming to inhabit an interdependent global economy in which production, distribution, labor, and investment have been internationalized, the best way to deal with such an economy besides creating a fair and balanced international economic order is to rely on local institutions. Local institutions are well-equipped to "shape" actual and particular markets and make their products or services globally competitive.

Local public-private partnerships are better suited to targeted economic development than broad-based regulatory institutions or the national bureaucratic state. Local governing coalitions can provide the impetus, necessary capital, cooperative environment, and public space for tailoring economic development to both local resources and specialized global market needs. In the U.S., for example, cities like Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Seattle can call upon a range of public-private partnerships and formal-informal institutions to devise an industrial policy suited to their own "homegrown" enterprises and to the specialized market niches of the global economy. In contrast, any attempt at industrial policy by the federal government will be mired in special interests and bureaucratized planning which is always too little and too late to do any good.

The hope is that as such public-private partnerships evolve, they will become something more than governing coalitions interested primarily in bricks and mortar for downtown revitalization or, at best, in the general renovation and expansion of the local economy; and that they will become the building blocks of a new society. The promise of such loosely organized coalitions is that they will develop into strong civic institutions with the capacity to devise common public objectives and foster cooperation and a politics of negotiation. The more inclusive they become, the more likely they will provide the groundwork for a democratic culture and a renewed sense of moral and social responsibility. If we are lucky, these formal-informal institutions will at the local level reconfigure what we have lost—a public sphere in which common work, ethical debate, and democratic social interaction are part of everyday life. That is pershaps why we in the West so admire what has happened in Central and Eastern Europe. Institutions such as Poland's Solidarity and Czechoslovakia's Civic Forum may remind us of what we have lost and what—in some new avatar—we must regain, a "public sphere" which, even in the midst of the police state, kept political ideas, moral meaning, and the possibility of a genuine politics alive. □

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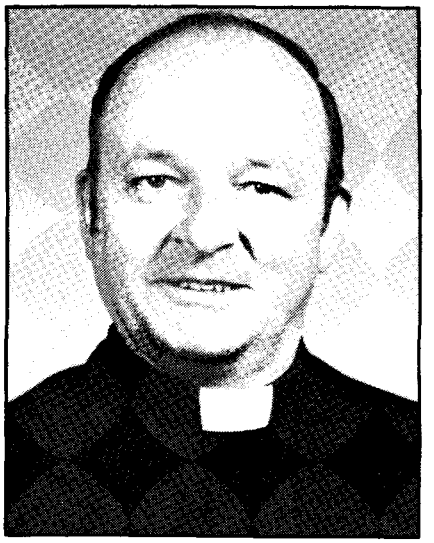

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POEMS

Nancy G. Westerfield

Erasing the Angles

As dancers know it: akimbo can never be
Beautiful, but useful only for comic
Effect; and all the hours before the barre
Are given to forcing fluidity where bone
Is jointed to bone, stretching the fiber
Of muscle to ribbon out over elbow
And knee so that motion flows silkenly,
Angleless. Even the harshest breath
Must be confined to an inkling of lifted
Breast. So ceaselessly suppled, the body
Becomes only dancing: back and its branches
Of arm and leg, finger and toe, connected
To the spiraling core of life. Death
Will be time enough for their comic effect.

Catching the News

At six o'clock any evening, we could tell
She was catching the news: behind her sheers,
The underwater-blue of television spasmed
With life. Broken by eighty-seven years
Of news bearing havoc and loss, she rocked
Solitary before the television, stoically
Tuning it in, turning it off at ten to turn in.
Miss Marple cracking a case was lately
Her solace, found open on the bedside table
Beside her reading glasses. The mortician
Balances them precisely against her nose.
No need of breaking the news to any;
There are none. No one has telephoned
To stop the daily paper: at six, the front
Screen snaps catching its toss, the news
Of her own death delivered to the door.

The Surveyor

How he sees the sky is different
From the rest of us recognizing clouds
And weather; this county, and the stringing
Of its power lines, have been his lifework.
"Those are mine," he says proudly, pointing out
What we hadn't even noticed as we drive:
The stretched grid of wires overhead that mesh
With pylons in the field. "That field!"
He says, "in a December sleet-storm
Was an ice-crust over mud up to here.
But out there with a level when it's April,
I should be paying them for my job."
Those fences across the field keep the cattle,
He says, away from loving the poles too much;
But none keep him. His trudge wet-footed
With a tripod is everywhere revealed
For him by gloriously ascending spires,
His footwork mapped in mirror-images
Of networks on a heaven nearer than ours.

Sinking-Heart Moon

Some time in late afternoon, it surfaced
Through the thunderheads, the silver edge
Of it almost bright as sun against the swagged
Green raggedness of the storm. It took us
Again through the afternoon of ritual:
The green pavilion looped back over the grave
To let in the stooping few who gathered
For last words. The gathering clouds blew
At the tent-flaps; the air had been alert
With rain. The words were hurried, to send us
Home in dun darkness. The knife-edged moon
Showed itself just as we came to the door,
Straining to outrun its sinking into what
The end of day would bring. And now the rain.

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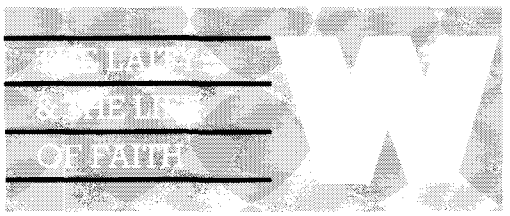
MEETING GOD IN CAROLINA

SOME DAYS IT'S NOT SO EASY

JIM JOHNSON &
KATHY JOHNSON



We are a team—a physician assistant and a family nurse practitioner—working together in a health clinic in rural North Carolina. It is a community-owned clinic in Stovall, a town of 470 persons; however, the clinic has a registered population of over 9,000 persons from the surrounding areas. Three physicians provide backup for us, one of whom comes for at least half-a-day from a town ten miles away. The clinic is open six-days-a-week, providing on-call coverage the rest of the time. In addition to the providers, there are two nurses, an office manager, two secretary-receptionists, and a computer operator. During the summer, the clinic hires a Spanish translator to assist patients who are migrant farm workers.

The area is 50 percent black and 50 percent white, with an influx of Hispanics in summer. Tobacco farming has been the predominant source of income in the past, but with hard times for farmers and decreasing tobacco production, people are taking jobs in small factories—many of which have moved to the South for cheaper, non-union labor. The county is 40 percent illiterate (less than an eighth-grade reading proficiency); 16.8 percent of the population live below the poverty line.

There are days when it's very easy to "meet God" here. When asked how she is, an elderly black woman we know responds, "Thanks be to God, I be doin' fine," or "With the Lord's and your help, I made it this far." Simple honest people talk about God freely. It is humbling. It is obvious that these remarks come from the heart; it is the way these people live their lives—with God and the church as part of their everyday lives. People care about each other and overt violence is rare. It is a shame that some of this is lost with younger generations and supposed sophistication.

On other days it is not so simple to find God here. Racism, sexism, and religious prejudice are prevalent. Patients frequently don't keep appointments, can't afford medication, and don't comply with treatment plans, yet get angry when we can't see them immediately or if they "aren't well yet"—even if they haven't complied.

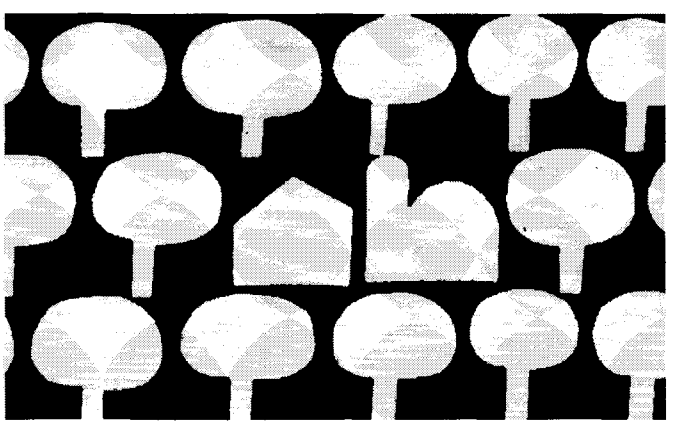
The community as a whole has been supportive of the clinic and of us. We hope that, if nothing else, with an integrated staff of blacks, whites, and Hispanics providing care to all, the clinic stands as a symbol of openness and caring.

Both of us try to be involved in community activities: the PTA, the emergency medical squad, the Parent Opportunity Program—a group of volunteers who work with pregnant teenage girls. We work with various councils and boards: the county FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) board, the diocesan Catholic Social Ministries Board, the county Interagency Council, the Agricultural Extension Service Advisory Council, and the EMT Advisory Council. And we are active in parish life, teaching in the RCIA program, RENEW, and religious education. (One priest rotates among three small churches here; the education programs are combined.)

The Catholic church in the rural South is very different from the churches (in New Jersey and an all-German town in Iowa) where we grew up. When we were interviewed in 1980 for our jobs here, the board members learned that we were Catholic. Kiddingly, but with a note of genuine concern, they told us that they felt hiring us would "probably work, but would work for sure if we would just become Baptists."

The community has never seemed to hold it against us that we didn't, but our children have occasionally been the targets of prejudicial taunts at school. Patients have told us that they once thought Catholicism was some kind of "cult." Recently, a coworker expressed amazement that we were "Christians" who believed in the Resurrection. Certainly, the misinformation between churches isn't one-sided; we are encouraged to see the local Catholic church begin to reach out in ecumenical activities and social action.

Our restlessness and searching is probably deepest when we are involved within the Catholic church. We find it hard to "wit-



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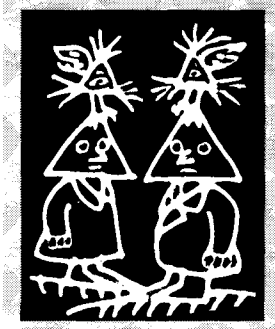

In 1987, *Commonweal* published a series of articles by lay people who described their personal experience of faith in the work place. We received such positive response to the series that we decided to continue it. We asked each individual: How is your Catholic faith manifest in your daily life and work? How has faith shaped your choices: vocational, financial, ethical; and vice versa? Where do you find spiritual strength and guidance?

Our fifth installment in this series is by Jim and Kathy Johnson, health-care providers at a clinic in Stovall, North Carolina.

ness" and "proclaim" through a church that, in its own structure, discriminates against women and tries to silence those who proclaim liberation theology. Yet it is precisely there, where things upset and confuse us most, that clarity comes.

For example, two years ago when the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) talks were being held, our bishop wrote to the churches in a letter read at the Masses, asking people to sign a petition to support the treaty. We could see several people bristling in their pews, and before the recessional was over, people were running out to talk to the priest. He pleadingly called, "Jim and Kathy, Help!" The people were asking how a Catholic could not advocate making more weapons to fight communism. Didn't we care about the freedom of religion? How could we be duped so completely?

As we approached World War III on the church steps, the irony seemed acute: we had all just worshiped together; we are all God's people; God tolerates this, loving us all; yet we don't agree on very much. We watched and listened, and couldn't help respect the passion and commitment of our vocal parishioners. They were as concerned about the church and other people as we were. We had all thought about the same issues, even if we had come up with totally different conclusions and solutions (though it is hard to see how). The incident was an eye-opener, and the beginning of some mutual tolerance, then caring. The church is a confusing place, but it has brought many of us to strong convictions.

Several weeks ago we listened to a tape by Sister Joan Chittister, in which she enumerates the reasons she stays in the Catholic church, one of which seemed particularly applicable to us. The church, she says, is where she came to her concern for the poor, the environment, and the world, and gained a feeling of camaraderie with all peoples.

Living here, we constantly have to search for things that nourish us. Our house could easily pass for a "branch library"; we should own stock in the publishing business. We have taken part in several conferences in the area and in diocesan programs, but they are fairly infrequent and are generally some distance away. Staying in touch with friends who share our interests and concerns helps us to hold on to our values and convictions.

Of the two of us, Jim has been particularly involved in formal religious studies: taking a self-designed program of theological study for several years, courses through Earlham College, Catholic University, and St. Theodore Orthodox Academy. It has been something of a struggle, but it continues to be an important element in his search for identity and meaning as a Catholic Christian and as a Christian health-care provider.

One of the most important gifts in our lives has been a reconnection with the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, Minnesota. (I, Kathy, belonged to that order in the sixties and have maintained contact over the years.) Four years ago, we both became lay affiliates with the order—a means of providing mutual support, resources, and a sharing of struggles and values. The socially active and deeply spiritual lives of the sisters are inspiring to us. We are grateful to be able to meet with them and to share letters, videos, and tapes. It is a relationship that has become a source of strength for us.

Along with the restlessness and the search is a frequent awareness of a "hunger" we each feel. When we are quiet long enough to allow this hunger to surface, it is clear that it is from God. Only in stillness and in prayer is it satisfied. Our intentions are always better than our actions, and repeatedly we have to set aside new times and new ways for personal prayer, but God keeps nudging us. It is so easy to fill our days with patients, meetings, family, and household chores that when there is a pause or when we feel "burned out," we know we need to make time to let God nourish, lead, and satisfy us.

We are never sure where we will go or what lies ahead, but in looking back, we know that there has been a guiding hand. Each place we have worked, each labor, has prepared us for the next. We believe and trust in that for the future. □

SCREEN

AT WAR WITH OURSELVES

'GLORY' & 'FOURTH OF JULY'

The story of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers has already been told in one of our great American poems, Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead." It is told again in *Glory*, which, somewhere midway, becomes the first American movie to brush greatness since *The Godfather*. Truth is so rare in life, and rarer still in movies, that when a work like *Glory* comes along—after you finish shaking—you want to cheer its makers for their art and courage. This is not just a work of history or military history; it's about our national racial tragedy, almost our national soul.

Glory has the two finest black actors—perhaps the two finest actors—in American films today, Morgan Freeman (of *Street*

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Smart, *Lean on Me*, and the current *Miss Daisy*), and Denzel Washington (*A Soldier's Story*, *Cry Freedom*). They play ex-slaves who enlist in the 54th, eager to show their manhood and attain equality through soldiering. Freeman is strong, silent, eventually a sergeant; he need only blow his stack once to command obedience. Washington juts his jaw in everyone's face; with his nonstop belligerence, bony face, and shaved head, he's Michael Jordan with menace, aching to fight anyone. Matthew Broderick plays their colonel, Robert Gould Shaw, scion of rich Boston abolitionists.

Authenticity is *Glory*'s keynote. Casting Broderick marks no attempt to impose a white presence into a black story (as in *Cry Freedom* or *Mississippi Burning*); Shaw was the 54th's leader, and, naturally, no black officers were allowed. Still, focusing mostly on privates, *Glory* is a no-fuss example of how to teach inclusive history and document a minority group role in preserving America.

To do so, the 54th had to endure virulent racism in the Union army, and brave the wrath of the enemy if ever taken prisoner; the Confederacy issued orders for immediate execution of any blacks in uniform. The regiment also had to prove itself capable of soldiering; no one thought "coloreds" had the discipline and courage. But Shaw did; as played by Broderick, he realizes that they have to attain higher standards even to get to fight. In scenes between Washington and Broderick, larger issues are quietly raised: what is the future of black-white relations, how does America "get clean" again? In a way, *Glory* is about a terrible lost opportunity; the final shot symbolizes its subtext.

Glory follows the 54th from its recruitment to the bloody 1863 siege of Fort Wagner in South Carolina. Its combat scenes, aided by re-enactors at 1988's 125th anniversary of Gettysburg, are shot mostly in medium range to accentuate the closeness of nineteenth-century battle. They also commit the heresy of depicting just how murderous the Civil War actually was, and will free many from the pernicious claptrap in our folklore about it. Except for World War II, no conflict cost more American lives or more gravely threatened real national security. Mark Twain once joked that Walter Scott caused the Civil War; certainly he can be blamed for its movies, from *The Birth of a Nation* to *Gone with the Wind* to TV's "North and South," with their Scott-like romanticizations of plantation chivalry and the defense of states' rights. As James Allen MacPherson wrote in 1988's *Battle Cry of Freedom*, the issue was *one* state's right—to hold humans in bondage. As he writes in the January 8-15 *New Republic*, the 54th knew this. *Glory* reconstructs some harsh truths about the war too long swept under the magnolia blossoms of Tara.

Glory doesn't pretend many Northerners were noble on racial issues, except maybe Shaw, whose letters are one of the film's sources. But *Glory* does claim that the war represented a chance for blacks to assert themselves. Nothing in it is as stirring as a revival-type gospel session led by Freeman the night before the attack on Wagner, a scene powerful for its religious as well as military elements; here is a solid candidate for getting the shivers. Washington's awkward speech and strong conclusion spell out the stakes in the war. *Glory* doesn't mince images on the horror of battle. But it may remind us—current events notwithstanding—that the phrase "just cause" at least once had meaning.

What are the film's defects? Broderick may irk some viewers. Awkward at first, his portrayal eventually takes; he gives Shaw a stiff, almost antique rectitude. The real problem lies in the screenplay by Kevin Jarre, which is generally very well written. If only, at some points, it had been more explicit. Movies aren't plays; films like *A Man for All Seasons* may be too talky. But something beyond pregnant silence helps to make issues universal.

Glory is directed by Ed Zwick, one of the creators of "thirtysomething," a TV show fashionable both to watch and to malign. This film seems an opposite of Zwick's work to date. But at its core is "sixties-something," that is, a concern with issues like racial justice, which Zwick experienced as a student in the 1960s and which his TV "yuppies" haven't entirely lost. Of course, Zwick works in Hollywood, but he does have concerns that date from the time that tried, in effect, a second reconstruction. Would that *Glory* sparked a third.

Born on the Fourth of July covers more recent history— Vietnam. It starts strongly, with a succession of pastoral and domestic images: kids playing guns in the Long Island woods in the 1950s, baseball games, and a 4th of July parade where young Ron Kovic (Tom Cruise) enviously eyes veterans from the World War II. Directed by Oliver Stone (*Platoon* and *Wall Street*), it moves with quick, sure strides to the 1960s—Ron hears John Kennedy's "fight any foe" inaugural speech; swallows the anticommunism of his Catholic, cheerleading mother; enlists in the Marines; winds up (to his horror) killing babies near the DMZ; then, during Tet, takes a bullet in the back that leaves him paralyzed for life.

Stone knows how to evoke an era with bold brushstrokes; rarely have the late fifties and early sixties been so economically portrayed. The Vietnam scenes also show a sure hand: Stone shoots on a beach late in the day, using a filter that accentuates the glare; as with his jungle scenes in *Platoon*, you understand the terror of fighting when you can't *see* anything.

If *Platoon* was his war, *Born on the Fourth of July* is Stone's peace, or at least war on the homefront. It is not based on his own combat experiences, but those of Kovic, now a paraplegic, author of the original play, co-author of the screenplay, and a founder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. (Kovic barged into the 1972 Republican National Convention to protest Nixon's policies, then was invited to speak at the 1976 Democratic Convention, the two sequences that conclude the film.) *Born* is Kovic's "up from militarism," a portrayal of the hard process of dealing with injury, accepting his past, and growing into an antiwar activist.

The center of *Born* provides a strong antidote to glamorizing war, the kind of garish, gory material that Stone never fails to deliver. Scenes in a field ward, then in a veterans' hospital will wrench any stomach with their depictions of battle wounds and their aftermath, particularly the dependence of disabled vets on nurses and machines for their most basic bodily functions and human dignity. Cruise, expanding on what he showed in *Rain*

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Man, makes these scenes compellingly pathetic. To make *Born*, Cruise declined a high advance; in interviews, he has claimed that he felt guilty about the war-mongering in *Top Gun* (1985), was moved by *Platoon* (1986), and wanted to warn his young admirers about militarism. In any case, Stone and Kovic obviously saw that the best way to press their case was to use someone all-American.

Good. To many young people today, Vietnam is the only history they want to hear more about, the key ancestral memory. The film's vivid scenes of antiwar protests (including one made with Abbie Hoffman shortly before his death) will bring back for older viewers the chaos of those times and the sense of irrecoverable losses. But in its midsection *Born* falters. The real-life, episodic flow of events causes problems; midway, we lose track of three of the strongest characters near Kovic—his quiet, helpless father (Raymond J. Barry), his domineering mother (Caroline Cava), and a girlfriend (Kyra Sedgwick). The drama is also weakened by Stone's fondness for bluster, forced symbols, and blurry parallels between war and sex. Kovic's mother tells him early on that she dreams of him making great speeches; his final antiwar line is not the one she imagines. But she does hit one nail on the head: if *Glory* has too few, *Born* has too many words. Although it deals with more recent times, it feels more distant, more rhetorical. *Born* is a forceful and important film, but an uneven, unsatisfying one.

TOM O'BRIEN

STAGE

BOUND TOGETHER, HELD APART

'MY CHILDREN! MY AFRICA!'

The New York Theatre Workshop brought Athol Fugard's most recent play, *My Children! My Africa!*, to the Perry Street Theatre for a limited run as 1989 turned into 1990. Seats in the tiny theater were difficult to come by even though the critical reception was mixed. Some thought the play too didactic; some, too static, too burdened by set speeches often aimed directly at the audience. Such responses were more accurate as description than as criticism. Fugard is often didactic, his dramatic fables having a moral or political point to make. But the lessons are never as simple as they look on the surface. They can be as amorphous as the South African situation is complex. His characters tend to be representative figures, vehicles for often conflicting points of view (think of *The Road to Mecca*). But they have a way of slipping their ideational restraints, turning into characters too big for pigeonholes.

As a director, which he was with *My Children!*, Fugard sometimes places his performers on stage in patterns that emphasize their attitudinal isolation. That practice is particularly in evidence in the new play because its organizing image is the formal debate, an academic ritual that has no force in a conflict in which words have lost their power to shape action, and because the three characters, for personal and racial reasons, are not allowed to touch. There is a scene in which the effervescent black schoolteacher (John Kani) in the enthusiasm of the moment almost embraces the white schoolgirl (Lisa Fugard, the playwright's daughter), but his hands barely brush her shoulders as he pulls back to a conventional distance. The power of the play on stage is that what at first appears to be a clash of ideas becomes a painful presentation of three people inextricably bound together in a situation that keeps them apart. It was Kani, Miss Fugard, and Courtney B. Vance, as the black schoolboy, who made this sometimes intractable material so moving on stage.

I use the words *schoolgirl* and *schoolboy* to describe Isabel and Thami—as Mr. M, the schoolmaster, would have—although they are eighteen, on the edge of adulthood. They are oddly asexual for young people that age—as is Mr. M—but Fugard clearly does not want *My Children!* to echo *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act*. He has other business at hand here.

The play opens at the end of a debate between a team from a white girls' school and one from Mr. M's school. Thami and Isabel give the final summations for their teams, and although the debate is taking place at the black school and the point of contention is the place of women in society, Isabel carries the day in a vote by the host audience. As Mr. M hovers happily over the proceedings, the whole affair gives off a feeling of congeniality and interracial right reason. Mr. M. proposes to extend this happy state by entering the two young people as a team to represent their town in a countrywide contest on English literature. One of the most charming scenes in the play is a practice session in which Isabel and Thami attack one another with quotations from nineteenth-century poets. It is all too good to be true—a cosmetic bandage on a deep wound—and the best-laid plans of Mr. M collapse.

For Isabel, the experience at first is exhilarating, the discovery of a world that she has known only at a distance, glimpsed through conversations with servants; but she has to learn that her own good will is too fragile to bridge the division between Thami and Mr. M. For Mr. M, Thami is his best and brightest student, whose promise vindicates the years he has spent trying to teach in the poverty-stricken black school system. For Thami, Mr. M and his school are extensions of the oppressive white social structure. This is not only stated but presented dramatically as Mr. M asks Isabel but tells Thami to take part in the contest; Vance, as Thami, did remarkable things with his body as the humor and exuberance with Isabel turned to sullen acquiescence with Mr. M. Until the explosion. The time is 1984 and the student boycotts that began so violently on the Cape peninsula in 1980 have reached the Eastern Cape Karoo town. The school is burned and, despite Thami's attempt to save him, Mr. M is killed.

"You can't always play the hero," John Kani told a *New York Times* interviewer (December 17, 1989). "You have to play the villain." Yet, Mr. M is not really a villain. He tells Thami that he is an informer—and he may well be one—but surely the point about Mr. M is not what he has done but how he is perceived; to the young men in the street, informing is a logical extension

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of working within the system. Before his death, as he stands in the ruined school ringing the bell to call students who will not come, he recounts how, as a child, he discovered that words could create his image of Africa and how he devoted his life to finding someone who could receive those words from him and make the Africa he envisioned. Idealist as crotchety schoolmarm as collaborator, Mr. M may, as Thami suggests, have chosen death. Whatever their political differences, Mr. M wants to know that Thami is trying to save him for himself, not for the cause; and Thami regrets that he could never admit his love for the teacher. Need and regret give the actors something to work with for a moving finish, but they somewhat shift the focus of the play, even though from the beginning the personal elements could be glimpsed beneath the surface. The ending may be a little too neat, tying up loose ends that are, in fact, still loose. Thami, heading across the border to join the rebel forces, and Isabel, intent on achieving something that she has not yet defined, have become the hope for the African future that Mr. M evokes when he cries out, "My children! My Africa!"

GERALD WEALES

BOOKS

The blight in their baggage

THE OTHER SIDE
Mary Gordon
Viking, $19.95, 386 pp.

John B. Breslin

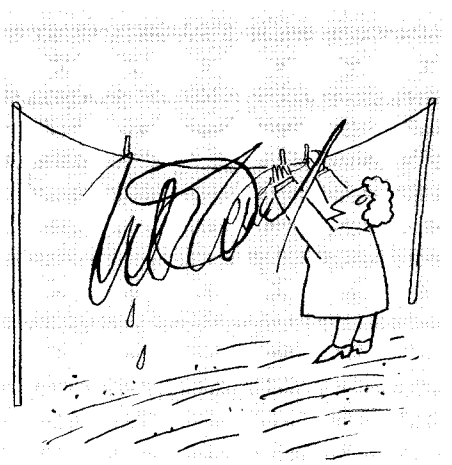
Mary Gordon's latest novel is also her most ambitious both in length and, more importantly, in scope. That's the good news about the novel, and it is indeed good. The bad news is that the execution isn't quite as good as the idea.

The Other Side covers one day in the life of the McNamara family, four generations of New York Irish-Americans who have most of the vices and some of the virtues of their kind. But that day extends backward over eight decades, and the novel's focus moves from the new world to the old and back.

In a Queens bedroom, the ninety-year-old matriarch, Ellen, lies angrily dying while a hundred miles east in a warmly lit nursing home her husband Vincent reluctantly waits to be brought back to her. In the meantime, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren gather in Queens to await the reunion and live out the grudges, resentments, and affections that have grown up across the generations.

But the story of Ellen and Vincent has its roots in Ireland, the most obvious but not the only sense of the novel's evocative title. The dark strain in the McNamara family romance flows in an appropriately Freudian way from a sibling rivalry that sours Vincent's growing up and from a maternal breakdown that destroys Ellen's idyllic childhood and breeds an undying hatred of her ambitious father for abandoning his wife. The long passage of retrospect that limn their troubled departures from home reveal Gordon at her narrative and psychological best. I found that judgment confirmed when, at a reading I attended, she chose to read exclusively from these sections. Here's a sample taken from Ellen's memories of her father's infidelity:

"But it was her job to hate her father. To punish him for leaving them alone in the stone house with only two windows, for allowing Marin Monahan in the house that had been once her mother's. To soil it with her filth. He'd made the mother darken, coarsen, till she looked out at the brown grasses from the moment of her awakening until dark, her only pleasure food, eaten fearfully, and greedily, like an animal. Her mother, once beautiful, now ruined, was her father's work."



And this from Vincent's recollection of his older brother's vicious killing of a pet lamb in a scene redolent of the Book of Genesis:

"While Vincent looked down at the animal's body, he knew everything. The first thing he took in with calm; it was simple: the animal was dead. The second made him frightened: he could see the remnants of life still within the animal. What happened had just happened. The third thing he knew made fear and anger grow inside his brain, like trees that grow from the same root beside each other, harmful and competitive, yet bound. His brother had done this to harm him. It was Vincent's throat, not the poor animal's, he would have liked to cut."

After such wounding, what healing? Surprisingly, for Ellen and Vincent, their marriage, tumultuous as its six decades prove to be, offers each the confidence and love they have lacked. Indeed, it is the only successful marriage in the whole novel. The blight they carried with them from the other side infects in one form or another all three of their children and most of the next two generations. It is not a happy fam-

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ily that gathers around Ellen to await Vincent's fulfillment of a vow she had extracted from him early in their marriage that he would never abandon her to an institution. Of all their descendants unto the third generation only Cam and Dan are presented as attractive individuals. Having alienated their daughters and lost their son in World War II, Ellen and Vincent attempt to recoup their losses through these two grandchildren whom they raise as their own. Cousins who become siblings, Cam and Dan inherit both Ellen's fierce determination to change the world and Vincent's calmer acceptance of life's anomalies. They also come to be partners in a local law firm specializing in divorce, a condition each knows intimately. Together they stand against their cousins and their aunts, intent on protecting Ellen and Vincent from their indifference and resentment.

What are we to make of this world of the McNamaras that Mary Gordon has created? Surely, it is an interesting one, especially in the persons of its matriarch and patriarch. The tangle of their love, as expressed in their own ruminations and in the deeply biased reflections of their progeny, confirms Tolstoy's observation about the uniqueness of unhappy families. When Vincent finally does return on the last page of the novel, he confirms what the story has already made abundantly clear:

"He walks through the living room, waving his hand at people, like a politician. He waves at his children, his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren. He has no time for them now.

"He is on his way to his wife."

In the end, Vincent and Ellen are alone together, more passionate and committed than any of their clan. All the rest, even Cam and Dan, fade into insignificance in the final ambiguous flaring of their lifelong love that closes the book:

"She hears his step in the room and opens up her eyes.

"He believes that she can see him, but he's not quite sure."

Vincent and Ellen dominate not only their family but Mary Gordon's novel as well, and both to questionable effect. Ellen's indifference toward her daughters is richly repaid by their hostility, just as her devotion to her son John is recompensed in the way of Irish fatalism with his death in battle. In setting out to do Tolstoy in Queens, Mary Gordon has taken as many risks as her heroine. If the list of family members and their interrelationships that prefaces the novel is a form of homage to her Russian models, it also should forewarn readers that exposition will be in short supply. The narrative shuttles from consciousness to consciousness with names being dropped in an entirely familial way, requiring many flips back to the list of dramatis personae. More seriously, the large cast dissipates both the narrative flow and the dramatic tension of the novel. Too many of the clan are more caricatures than characters, each with a special grudge or a special tic, like daughter Theresa's deadly combination of punishing remarks and charismatic prayers or grandson John's general ineffectualness. The protracted accounts of their unhappiness become tedious after a while, and the reader longs for the sharper passions of Ellen and Vincent which give the novel the genuine power it has.

In spite of these disappointments, I for one look forward eagerly (not anxiously) to Mary Gordon's next novel which I trust will be as daring in its way as *The Other Side*. □

PERFECT PITCH

SEEING VOICES
A Journey into the World of the Deaf
Oliver Sacks
University of California Press, $15.95, 180 pp.

Joseph Cunneen

Dr. Oliver Sacks is a deeply humanistic neurologist who has managed to draw on his field of specialization in a series of books, most notably *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, that impress his peers and also appeal to a nonspecialist audience. In *Seeing Voices* he brings his scientific and literary skills to bear on deafness; readers will learn to look at deaf people communicating in sign language with new respect and delight.

Sacks is an especially credible guide because he started with the same naive paternalism toward the deaf that most of us have absorbed in our culture: we feel vaguely sorry for them and assume that they should become as much like us as possible. His "journey into the world of the deaf" grew out of the task of reviewing a book about their history—*When the Mind Hears*, by Harlan Lane—in which he learned that Sign was different in mode from speech, and that the promising movement in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century education of the deaf primarily through Sign was crushed after 1870 by conformist pressure that they be forced to learn the "unnatural" (for them) language of speech.

Sacks only began to learn Sign after completing his book, but he is convincing and eloquent in describing it as a genuine language, with its own grammar and a "unique linguistic use of space." What at first seems to most of us like childish gesturing "is extraordinarily complex and consists of innumerable spatial patterns nested, three-dimensionally in each other." *Seeing Voices* dramatizes how liberating the use of this language (A.S.L., American Sign Language) is for the deaf, quite different from their experience in learning speech or even signed English, which corresponds to English word by word. The book's celebratory climax is the moving 1988 scene of protest in front of the Capitol with more than a thousand students from Gallaudet University—the internationally known college for the deaf—"signing freely" before the public in their demand for a deaf president for their school.

Seeing Voices is important in helping readers avoid dehumanizing the deaf—as Dr. Sacks confesses he used to do by looking at his deaf patients purely in medical terms as "diseased ears"—but is even more

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valuable in restoring a sense of wonder regarding the miracle of language. As he says, "the study of the deaf shows us that much of what is distinctively human in us—our capacities for thought, for communication, and culture—do not develop automatically in us, are not just biological functions, but are, equally, social and historical in origin; that they are a *gift*—the most wonderful of gifts—from one generation to another."

Sacks emphasizes the role of William Stokoe in drawing scientific attention to Sign as a proper language; it is startling to realize that the latter's pioneering *Sign Language Structure* was not published until 1960 and was first treated with disdain by the majority of the Gallaudet faculty. Even Noam Chomsky, whose idea of "generative grammar" is summarized by Sacks, referred to Sign as merely "the gesture language of the deaf," though at a 1965 conference he changed his definition of language from "a specific sound-meaning correspondence" to a "signal-meaning correspondence,"

Sacks's account of the student movement at Gallaudet in 1988, the third and final section of his book, is a powerful example of participant journalism; like his earlier review-article on *When the Mind Hears*, it first appeared in somewhat altered form in the *New York Review of Books*. This makes for a certain amount of repetition in *Seeing Voices*, and confusion is compounded by the distracting manner in which lengthy notes often run across successive pages; most could and should have been incorporated in the main text. On the other hand, the middle section of the book shows Dr. Sacks's skill in organizing the more specifically neurological aspects of his subject in a way that even lay readers can follow. He also provides six pages of references plus an annotated bibliography that would be invaluable for anyone wanting to read more on key aspects of his subject.

Seeing Voices succeeds by conveying its author's excitement not only with the intellectual discoveries he made in his research, but even more with the human aspects of the recent and ongoing breakthrough in consciousness among the deaf. Readers are powerfully aided in overcoming any condescension they may unconsciously harbor for the deaf and their language; indeed, they may never look at language itself in quite the same taken-for-granted way again. □

The hundreds of sign languages that have arisen spontaneously all over the world are as distinct and strongly differentiated as the world's range of spoken languages. There is no one universal sign language. And yet there may be universals in signed languages, which help to make it possible for their users to understand one another far more quickly than users of unrelated spoken languages could understand one another.

—Oliver Sacks
Seeing Voices

CEAUSESCU'S FOLLY

THE RAZING OF ROMANIA'S PAST

Dinu C. Giurescu
The Preservation Press, $19.95, 210 pp.

Thomas Swick

This detailing of Romania's architectural treasures and their destruction provokes a range of emotions not usually associated with the reading of what is, in effect, an archival study. There is, first, relief that the process of callous, costly, antinational demolition (a kind of architectural fratricide) has been halted with the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu. Surely the author, in writing this book, could not have foreseen the propitious circumstances in which it is now being reviewed.

But with this relief comes remorse at the vast amount of irreparable damage that has been done. Toward the back of the book, rich in architectural photographs, is a series of views of the Vacaresti Monastery in Bucharest, "the most outstanding achievement," according to the late art historian Vasile Dragut, "of eighteenth-century Romanian architecture." Among the photographs is one of a double gallery: small, graceful, clean white arches rising out of a courtyard of snow. They had, the text explains, been lovingly restored in the renovation carried out in the mid-1970s. This is followed by the news that in December 1984 demolition work began.

The author, Dinu C. Giurescu, is a historian who served for ten years on the Romanian Central Commission of the National Patrimony. He and his family left Romania in 1988 and since then have lived in the U.S. The book, sponsored by the Kress Foundation European Preservation Program of the World Monuments Fund, is divided into four brief chapters chronicling the urban and rural architectural heritage, the conservation and restoration work of the postwar years, and the destruction and resettlement projects that, in many cases, wiped out these earlier efforts.

The photographs give a sense of Romania's architectural richness not only in the capital, but in the countryside; not only in the national style, but in German and Hungarian styles as well; not only ecclesiastical (the monasteries of Romania are justly renowned) but secular. Among the most pleasing structures are the traditional Romanian rural houses, with their wide, sloping roofs and second-floor balconies decorated with intricate wooden latticework. It would have been lamentable enough had a foreign occupying force planned to destroy this heritage, but that it was to be extinguished by the country's own leaders is incomprehensible and, in Giurescu's view, unprecedented. "An entire country, obliged to live in collective dwellings, is subjected to a kind of social engineering never recorded in Europe's history."

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This rural heritage—houses, households, and sites of specific fabric—is the very synthesis of a people's history and expresses the national identity. To destroy this rural heritage and to replace it with standardized construction means not only to destroy a centuries-long evolution but at the same time to change the essence of a nation through a kind of social engineering never seen and never before accomplished at this scale in Europe's long history.

—Dinu C. Giurescu
The Razing of Romania's Past

News of Ceausescu's plan of rural systematization only reached the West over the last few years, when he announced its implementation. (There had already been reports of his ongoing demolition of large sections of Bucharest.) Through this plan, some 7,000-8,000 villages were to be destroyed (more than half of those in the entire country) and the residents to be housed in modern agro-industrial complexes. The ultimate goal was "to accelerate the process of homogenization of the Romanian socialist society, to reduce the main differences between village and town, and to achieve a single society of the working people."

According to Giurescu, this plan had its genesis much earlier; in 1973 "sketches of systematization were drawn up for 125 communities in Ilfov county." Its execution was given impetus, he claims, by the earthquake on March 4, 1977, which provided administrators an excuse for destroying old and damaged buildings.

Especially moving are the voices of architects and historians who had the courage to publicly oppose the plan. Giurescu himself, in an interview in 1983, declared that "To demolish the urban architectural building stock means to erase pages of history from people's minds and hearts...." "Every nation," reads a letter from the Central State Commission for the National Cultural Patrimony, "legitimizes its existence through its creativity. When the evidence of this creativity is suppressed piece by piece, the very identity of a nation is gradually lost."

Actual figures of the destruction were difficult to come by. In Bucharest, for example, no overall plan was ever released; residents were sometimes given no more than a few weeks' notice that they would have to abandon their homes. Giurescu notes that, by 1989, at least twenty-nine towns had been razed and demolition had commenced in thirty-seven others.

One of the most striking pictures in this book is of a sculptured column of the Vacaresti Monastery lying broken on the ground. In its fallen, ignominious position in an abandoned courtyard, it presages perfectly the ultimate fate of Nicolae Ceausescu. □

THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

AFRICAN CATHOLICISM
Essays in Discovery
Adrian Hastings
Trinity Press International, $14.95, 208 pp.

GOD IN SOUTH AFRICA
The Challenge of the Gospel
Albert Nolan
Wm. B. Eerdmans, $10.95, 242 pp.

Joseph G. Donders

In just over a century Christianity has become as native to large parts of Africa as maize meal or banana beer; an intriguing comparison by Adrian Hastings, as neither corn nor bananas are indigenous to Africa. Both Hastings and Albert Nolan are concerned to explain how this radical embeddedness of Christianity is both the strength of the African peoples'churches and its cross. The African churches were never allowed to be themselves, neither in the early church in Numidia, Ethiopia, and Nubia, nor in our own day in the sub-Saharan regions of East, West, and South Africa.

Hastings was once the only white priest in the first African-run black diocese in modern Africa, was then for some years a professor in Zimbabwe, and is now professor of theology at Leeds (England). In these twelve essays, he blames the Western-dominated Roman Catholic church for this rejection because of its pastoral, liturgical, sacramental, semantic, and iconographic approach. He also criticizes Rome's rejection of authentic African church leaders, like exiled Zambian Archbishop Milingo, who is now exercising a healing ministry in Rome. The Catholic church, Hasting contends, stubbornly clings to a type of ordained priesthood that deprives the small African Christian communities of the Eucharist.

Hastings's picture is not a pleasant one. Like Africa itself, the African church is passing through a dark tunnel. But there are points of light. From the beginning Africans received the person of Jesus as the presence of God in their midst. They did so with a wholeheartedness that the harbingers of the Good News were unaccustomed to.

Africans welcomed Christ in a "redemptionist" and "incarnationist" model with a "quest for healing and community and the strength to carry on through poverty, riot, and famine...profoundly other worldly but profoundly this worldly too." African spirituality directly relates to the material and the communal, to flesh and blood, to food and drink, to bodies, and consequently to struggle.

Albert Nolan, who was elected Master General of the Dominican Order in 1983, immediately resigned to return to the struggle in South Africa. Nolan documents the spiritual energy in the black communities of his home country. "One of the most striking features of the African concept of religion, in comparison with Western Christianity, is that there is no separation whatsoever between religion and life." He recounts how the South African leader and martyr, Steven Biko, in an interview just

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before his arrest, torture, and execution, talked with Malusi Mpumlwana "about the role of God in this situation."

Nolan explores how this "God-with-us" interpretation radically changes and de-imperializes all other theological notions. Sin is not transgressing a law. Sin is causing suffering. Salvation is not getting rid of some personal guilt. It is the change of the whole political, economic, and religious system (Luke 4:18-19). It implies that God joins the human struggle to attain this redemption, and that God's church cannot be on the side of those who are causing the suffering, and therefore sinning. Nor can the church distance itself from the conflict, taking a kind of third position from which to negotiate a reconciliation between the two warring parties. The church should be like Jesus, engaged in the struggle.

Nolan certainly has the advantage of being engaged in the struggle from inside. Hastings, meanwhile, remains a sympathetic but academic outsider. Both positions have their strengths and weaknesses. Nolan, understandably, is so engaged in the South African crisis that he seems to have lost touch with recent biblical scholarship: his assessment and condemnation of the Pharisees in the time of Jesus, for instance, does not take into consideration recent insights into the Pharisaic position and its influence on Jesus. John Pawlikowski has written: "One does not have to set Jesus over against the whole of Judaism in his time to retain his revolutionary credentials" (*Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, Paulist Press). Yet, the strength of Nolan's message makes up for such shortcomings.

Both books are thoroughly readable. Like a well-established TV series in which the actors' roles are predictable, Western Christian theology often follows a familiar pattern. It is when new experiences, like the African ones described in these books, are thrown in and made welcome, that horizons widen, Peter's boat is rocked, and Jesus' emancipatory solidarity is again alive among us. A renewal our church needs. □

THE CONSPIRACY OF TESTING?

DANGEROUS DIAGNOSTICS
The Social Power of Biological Information
Dorothy Nelkin and Laurence Tancredi
Basic Books, $18.95, 207 pp.

Thomas A. Shannon

Testing is one of the main experiences that unites us all. We spend a fair amount of time as children testing our parents. But then they take revenge by sending us to school and beginning what seems to be an eternity of testing. When we entered the work world, we found other sorts of tests: Job evaluations, competition, promotions, raises. This book raises the test ante considerably higher by describing a new dimension of testing: testing as social control.

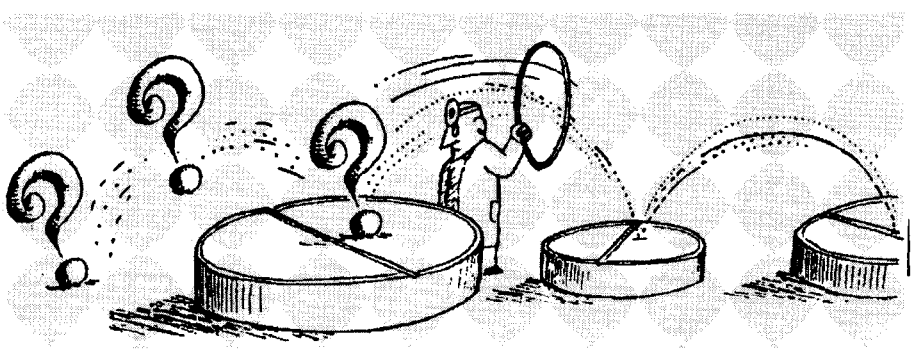
After providing an introduction and discussion of the concept of diagnosis, the authors look at testing, and the social implications of both diagnosis and testing in health care, the work place, and the schools. The concluding chapters examine the legal implications of testing and examine how biological tests, in particular, can be used to effect social control.

Nelkin—on the faculty of New York University and quite distingushed as a sociologist of science—and Tancredi—who teaches medicine and law at the University of Texas Health Science Center—are utterly clear in their mistrust and suspicion of the technologies they discuss and the use to which they assume these will be put. As evidence for their perspective, they put forward a sampling of quotes from officials, journals, and a series of case studies. These highlight the negative applications of various testing technologies. The assumption of the book seems to be that as soon as a diagnostic technology or method is developed, it will be put to the service of the state or its officials.

I think the authors implicitly buy into many of the exaggerated claims being made on behalf of the genetic structure of an individual, claims that have yet to be subjected to rigorous testing. Many of the fears expressed about genetic or medical testing raised by the authors give unintended and uncritical support to these claims. This is the major weakness of the book. The public would better be served by a thorough analysis of the premise of such arguments.

Nonetheless, the concerns and fears the authors raise are legitimate. The American eugenics movement, the past legalization of the sterilization of the mentally infirm and criminals, and the labeling of and discrimination against those with certain diseases—or who carry them—provide an unhappy context in which the concerns of the authors should be heard.

Nelkin and Tancredi rehearse several critical case studies to reinforce their main points. In 1980, the American Cyanamid plant barred females of childbearing age from working with certain toxic substances, unless they could prove they were sterilized. The assumption was that workers, not employers, are responsible for their



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health and safety. Pre-employment medical testing is being extended to evaluate fitness for work. Individuals have claimed being barred from employment because of hypersusceptibility to chemicals. Other companies have tested blacks for sickle cell anemia. Such labeling could make work difficult to obtain, keep individuals from being insured, and create a genetic underclass.

The authors also examine the role of the professional as institutional agent, one facing an increasing number of conflicts of interest between the well-being of patients or employees and the interests of the company. The authors expand the model of the company doctor to schools, hospitals, insurance companies, and the courtroom. Despite an unfortunate history of company doctors facing "conflicts of interest," the authors' conspiratorial tone leads me to be somewhat suspicious of their far-reaching claims.

The concluding chapter, "Social Control Through Biological Tests," focuses on the themes of institutional conformity, the use of professionals to define, measure, and implement standards of normality, and the disenfranchisement of people through biological discrimination.

Rather than building an argument of their own and critiquing the premises of their adversaries, the authors present a series of compelling and troubling images and articulate a conspiracy of testing. While these issues are important, the discussion has not been advanced much beyond the sixties; the reader is left with only very general nostrums for remedy and without a clear sense of how to develop a strategy to respond to the issues raised. □

RETRACTIONS OF A GENIUS

THE GODWINS AND THE SHELLEYS
William St. Clair
W.W. Norton and Co., $32.50, 572 pp.

Nancy Boyd

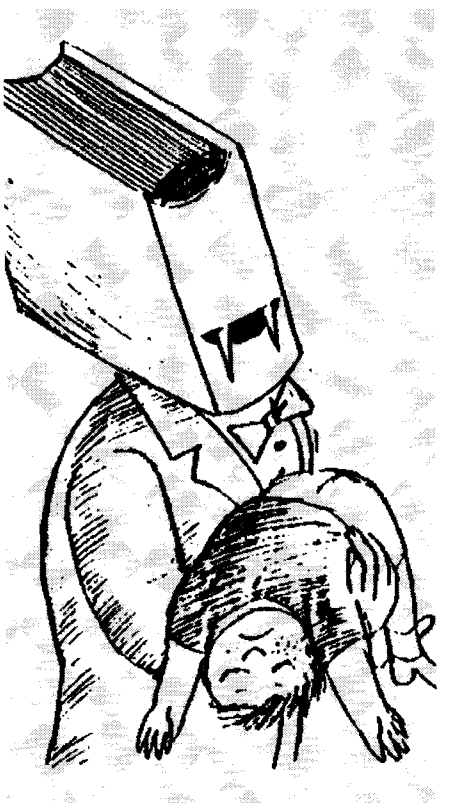
This monumental work presents William Godwin as the moving force in British intellectual history during a pivotal epoch, the transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. His biographer, William St. Clair, plunges into the complexities of the London publishing world, the debating societies, radical clubs, and the symbiotic relations between debtors and creditors with the passion for detail befitting an official in her Majesty's Treasury. His analysis of Godwin's handwriting and idiosyncratic spelling enables him to add twelve new works to the known Godwin corpus and to identify Godwin's editorial hand in his daughter's novel, *Frankenstein*.

While Godwin's life as publisher, novelist, and political activist is given its due, his contribution to social theory, *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, appears as the centerfold. Published a month after the execution of Louis XIV, it became the talk of the coffee houses. Like many critics, Godwin was more effective in describing societies' faults than in his prescriptions. Corruption, an economic system that supports the rich "pensioners" and exploiters of the poor, a hereditary monopoly of power reinforced by the self-serving laws of church and state, institutions that treated women as property—all came under attack. Freed from these, the new men and women would recover their natural virtue based on reason and with every generation would move closer to perfectionism. Clumsily attached to outdated images (nature as cause and effect, Aeolian harps, the clash of billiard balls; the human mind as *tabula rasa*), Godwin's thesis—in spite of the excitement it created in the decade after its publication—was not entirely satisfactory, even to the author himself.

To Shelley, Godwin would admit that his life had been "a series of retractions." Steadfast in his feminism, his condemnation of violence, and his advocacy of the rights of individuals guaranteed by representative government, he abandoned his faith in reason. Through his relationships with his first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, and later, in his somewhat troubled second marriage, he came to recognize the primacy of the emotions. He recommended kindness as the developer of the imagination. As a publisher, he rejected the hellfire sermons and moralizing tales that were popular, offering his child readers myths, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, and *Old Mother Hubbard*, as well as several histories that emphasized republican virtues.

Through raising five highly individual children, three of whom were not related by blood, he found no evidence for a *tabula rasa*. He played a major familial role while fending off creditors, courting potential sponsors, struggling against a neurological disorder that brought on attacks of unconsciousness. Encouraging talents, reconciling conflicts, he offered advice, much of which was not taken. (Here the book suffers from its single focus. One longs to hear the children's point of view.) While his attentions may have been intrusive, there is no question of his love.

Like many others before him, he saw his ideas destroyed by distortion and mis-



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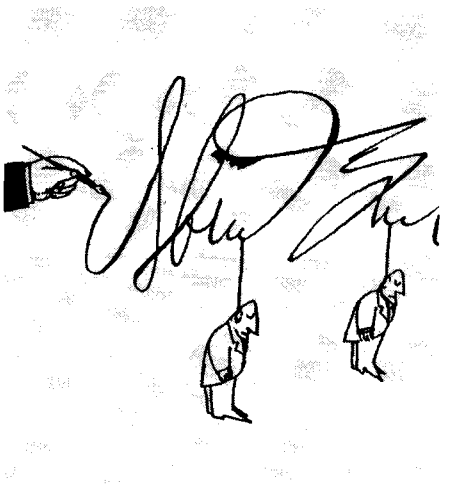
appropriation. License was passed off as freedom. He had envisioned a world in which seduction had no meaning since relationships between the sexes would be determined by free inclination and choice, yet he found himself chasing Shelley and his daughters, a scandalous ménage à trois, in their flight across Europe. With the zeal of the Evangelical preacher, which he had once been, he lashed out at Byron, the father of his illegitimate grandchild.

In addition Godwin was forced to acknowledge his own culpability. He saw the errors of his own views spelled out in the sufferings of his children. His theory had failed to recognize the devastating power of convention. The freedom of one generation could inflict pain and sometimes fatal damage on the next. Fanny, Mary Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter whom Godwin adopted when she was three years old, had not found a husband; the Wollstonecraft aunts were reluctant to take her in. During a period of dissension in her immediate family, she killed herself.

St. Clair's sympathy and shrewd intelligence present a subtle and powerful portrait of his complex subject. Devious, honest, self-centered, naive, highly intelligent, stubborn, quixotic—Godwin lacks, the lucidity, the single flaw of the hero of Greek tragedy; yet he emerges from St. Clair's bravura treatment as a giant of a man—a hero indeed. □



ARTFUL DODGERS

FABRICATING LIVES
Explorations in American Autobiography
Herbert Leibowitz
Alfred A. Knopf, $24.95, 387 pp.

Peter LaSalle

In his recent collection of autobiographical essays, *Self-Consciousness*, John Updike admits that he had never really thought of writing a formal autobiography. He was content enough with his fiction and the way it admittedly contained a heavy serving of material from his own life. But he changed his mind when he heard that a biographer was setting out to write his, Updike's, story; Updike wanted to give his side of the tale first. Already the strains of Frank Sinatra's "I Did It My Way" start to work their way into the score.

Which is to say that autobiography is maybe the trickiest of genres. Whereas fiction when done well elicits a willing suspension of disbelief, and whereas straight biography when done well isn't supposed to involve any disbelief to begin with, autobiography somehow gets muddled, by announcing itself as fact, but fact that invites skepticism in its presentation by somebody with more than a simple vested interest.

Enter into this territory Herbert Leibowitz with an engaging new study, *Fabricating Lives*. Leibowitz, a professor at the City University of New York and editor of the respected journal *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, takes for his subject the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin, Louis Sullivan, Jane Addams, Emma Goldman, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Richard Wright, and Edward Dahlberg. Up front he announces: "The grand theme of American autobiography, almost its fixation, is the quest for distinction, a quest that has shaped and deranged American identity throughout our history." What Leibowitz does is mostly rhetorical analysis, showing how the advertising for oneself works, seldom straightforwardly, to conjure up the desired image of distinction. He transports the prose, sentence by sentence, to the lab. There, microscopic scrutiny shows things like the way Williams's ongoing homey vernacular, supposedly used to establish his innocence, can be overdone to the point that it becomes a transparent mask for his essential sophistication. Or how Stein's atonal simplicity, which relies on understatement and repetition, becomes not entirely her life story but more a matter of a deliberate testimonial in the style itself to the ground-breaking experiments she performed with words in her fiction—fiction that often went unpublished, and when published, unread.

For me the two most interesting studies are not of literary figures, but of the architect Sullivan and the social worker Addams. Perhaps the overall success of this book (itself elegantly written) lies in Leibowitz's including autobiographies of literary notables (what might be expected of an English professor) *and* American "doers" from other fields. As a result he has delivered nothing less than a fresh reading of American history. Verbal subterfuge aside, the story of Sullivan is worth re-examination. A true master of his art who was slighted by the aristocrats of Boston when a young man, who left to study at the Beaux Arts in Paris, who returned to Chicago because in its wide-open proclaiming of American strength it seemed the place an architect should be then, and who died relatively neglected, taking on occasional assignments toward the end to design bank buildings in rural Iowa or Minnesota. Or the story of Addams. Growing up in the Midwest she felt lonely because of a spinal deformity; she idolized her father to such a degree that she went along with his decision that she shouldn't pursue higher education (she was admitted to Smith College), and then went on to apply his lofty principles of concern in her quietly courageous caring for others at Hull House in the Chicago slums, her sole noticeable flaw an inability to give full credit to some of the others who worked with her there. These are complicated and

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significant lives, deserving of full psychological and sociological interpretations, and Leibowitz comes well prepared for those tasks, in their nuances, too.

One idea that Leibowitz doesn't probe in detail but which struck me as important in thinking of all of this is how, paradoxically, the autobiography the reader might trust the most is the one that presents itself as fiction. Paul Theroux's recent novel *My Secret History* is a good example. Theroux writes about the lovers of a writer of Franco-American descent who is raised in Massachusetts, becomes a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, and goes on to marry a successful British woman and find his books on the bestseller lists. It is all so close to the commonly known facts of Theroux's life that the instinct here is to believe that disguised as fiction we are getting the *real* inside story indeed. Maybe Benjamin Franklin—that seminal American autobiographer, as Leibowitz reminds us—should have put it all in a roman à clef. □

REVIEWERS

JOHN B. BRESLIN, S.J., *is director of Georgetown University Press and the editor of* The Substance of Things Hoped For *(Doubleday).*

JOSEPH CUNNEEN *is co-editor of* Cross Currents *and teaches religion at Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.*

THOMAS SWICK *is travel editor of the* Sun-Sentinel *in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. He writes frequently on Eastern Europe.*

REV. JOSEPH G. DONDERS *is chair of Mission and Crosscultural Studies at the Washington Theological Union. His most recent book, co-authored with Elizabeth Byrne, is* Original Joy *(Twenty-Third Publications).*

THOMAS A. SHANNON *is professor of religion and social ethics at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester, Mass.*

NANCY BOYD *is the author of* Three Victorian Women Who Changed Their World *(Oxford).*

PETER LaSALLE *teaches at the University of Texas at Austin. His fiction includes* Strange Sunlight *(Texas Monthly)* and The Graves of Famous Writers *(Missouri).*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 66)

passing, and it is, indeed, a genuine storm.

Should I be asked what in my judgment may be the most severe challenge facing the American Catholic as we near the year 2000, I would hazard the guess that it will be the ability of this religious community to remain true to the church's basic teachings while the Catholic American continues to be an active participant in American secular society. The two have seemingly irreconcilable differences; yet I am not daunted by that fact. Should I be asked what prompts this confidence, I could adduce the history of the Catholic church in the U.S. since 1789 as proof that she has lived through two centuries in this American environment, and though she has known undoubted rebuffs and failures, she has risen above these reverses and has emerged on the two hundredth birthday of her organized life a living body of nearly 55,000,000 members, bruised to be sure, here and there, but basically intact, with acknowledged grave losses since the 1960s, yet far stronger than most of her sister branches of the universal church in the Western world. Like Chesterton's "wild truth," she has come through "reeling but erect"; and that because there have been—and will be—a sizable number of women and men who will answer Newman's question as to how truth has been maintained, a question to which he gave this answer: "it has been upheld in the world not as a system, not by books, not by argument, not by temporal power, but by the personal influence of such men [and women] as...are at once the teachers and patterns of it."

JOHN TRACY ELLIS
The Catholic University of America

Missing element

Spokane, Wash.

To the Editors: As a longtime subscriber to *Commonweal* I want to express my gratitude and admiration for the courage and intellectual forthrightness of the magazine.

The sixty-fifth anniversary issue has just arrived. In your discussion on the correspondence page about Catholics and racism you do not touch on the heart of the matter—socioeconomic reform—without which racism and attendant degrees of crime will continue. From constant, grassroots education, and ultimately through the Congress, effective legislation will modify the capitalism-cum-excessive-profit-motive system which deprives citizens of job opportunities and the nation of needed public works. It has been said that eight years of Reaganism have set this country back a century. There are growing numbers of voters and taxpayers who believe that the standards launched by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison ought to be improved in the interests of increased democracy, and not permitted to fail by creeping default. In a shrinking world, there are hopeful signs—that Thatcherism and Reaganism are inadequate to solve contemporary problems.

HENRY D. ELLIS

Correction: The last line of "Booknotes" (Jan. 26) was inadvertently dropped. The sentence should have read: "Readers of Commonweal have received a sample of McGovern's book (Nov. 3, 1989), but the whole deserves a reading for its comprehensive overview of a movement that has been a shaping force in contemporary Christianity."

Deeper malaise

Northampton, Mass.

To the Editors: Columnist Abigail McCarthy displays a refreshing concern for the childhood of degradation that many unwanted children confront in the U.S. today ["The Least of These, " December 1, 1989]. Her compassion is a stark counterpoint to our commodification of Christmas. Yet her perspectives also read like a Rorschach on addressing social ills today: A few scapegoats are identified and underlying causes evaded.

In the author's demonology, one finds culprits including "case-hardened adults in foster care for the money," "parents' use of drugs," and "impersonal government social programs." Yet she could have added that society itself is mesmerized by money, that openings in drug rehabilitation programs are rare pearls, and that few of us

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think to challenge the government to improve its services. Such considerations do not exonerate callous adult behaviors which impact on children but hint that such neglect is symptomatic of a far deeper malaise in the nation....

Our children will receive the care that is their birthright only when adults demand a humane society and sacrifice to bring it to pass. Until then our most vulnerable population segments will be dismissed as the weak links in an otherwise exceptional society. R. JAY ALLAIN

Dangerous clarity

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: Cardinal O'Connor's contribution to your splendid sixty-fifth anniversary issue [November 17] was so generous in its effort to listen and respond to the participants in the archdiocese of New York synod that I hesitate to raise what might appear to be an intellectualistic cavil concerning the request of the participants in this synod. According to Cardinal O'Connor, the request was: "give us the word of God clearly, straightforwardly, unambiguously, and we will use it to address every other need." Now the cardinal's response in terms of our belief in the "worth and dignity and sacredness of *every* human person," is most commendable. Nevertheless, the implication that we ought to ask our religious leaders to give us the word of God "clearly, straightforwardly, unambiguously," and that they should attempt to do so is fraught with danger and must be cautioned against.

I would state the caution as follows: If there is anything that appears to be evident after two thousand years of Christianity and five thousand years of Judaism, it is that the word of God cannot be given "clearly, straightforwardly, unambiguously." It can only be given indirectly with the ambiguity, confusedness, fragility, elusiveness, and tentativeness that characterize the particular moment within which it is given, and the psychological-spiritual condition of those who are struggling to receive it. Most important, we cannot wait upon an impossible clarity, straightforwardness, and unambiguity before we act upon that word. Indeed, only by acting upon our always limited grasp of this word can we continually refine and enrich our lived experience and understanding of it. We must ever act in fear and trembling, continually striving to discern the authentic dimension of the word of God and distinguishing it from our own inevitable distortions. What we must never do is identify our historically, culturally, and psychologically conditioned understanding and articulation of this word with the word itself. To do so is to fall into that idolatry which, as the Scriptures seem to warn us, is the ancient and continuing temptation of human beings in their effort to participate in that reality which is at once, and paradoxically, radically present and radically other. Our understandable effort to express this presence-otherness in modes more congenial to ourselves too often leads us to empty this reality of its depth. A "depth" which after the greatest of the mystics, theologians, and philosophers have done their communicative best can only be expressed as mystery. EUGENE FONTINELL

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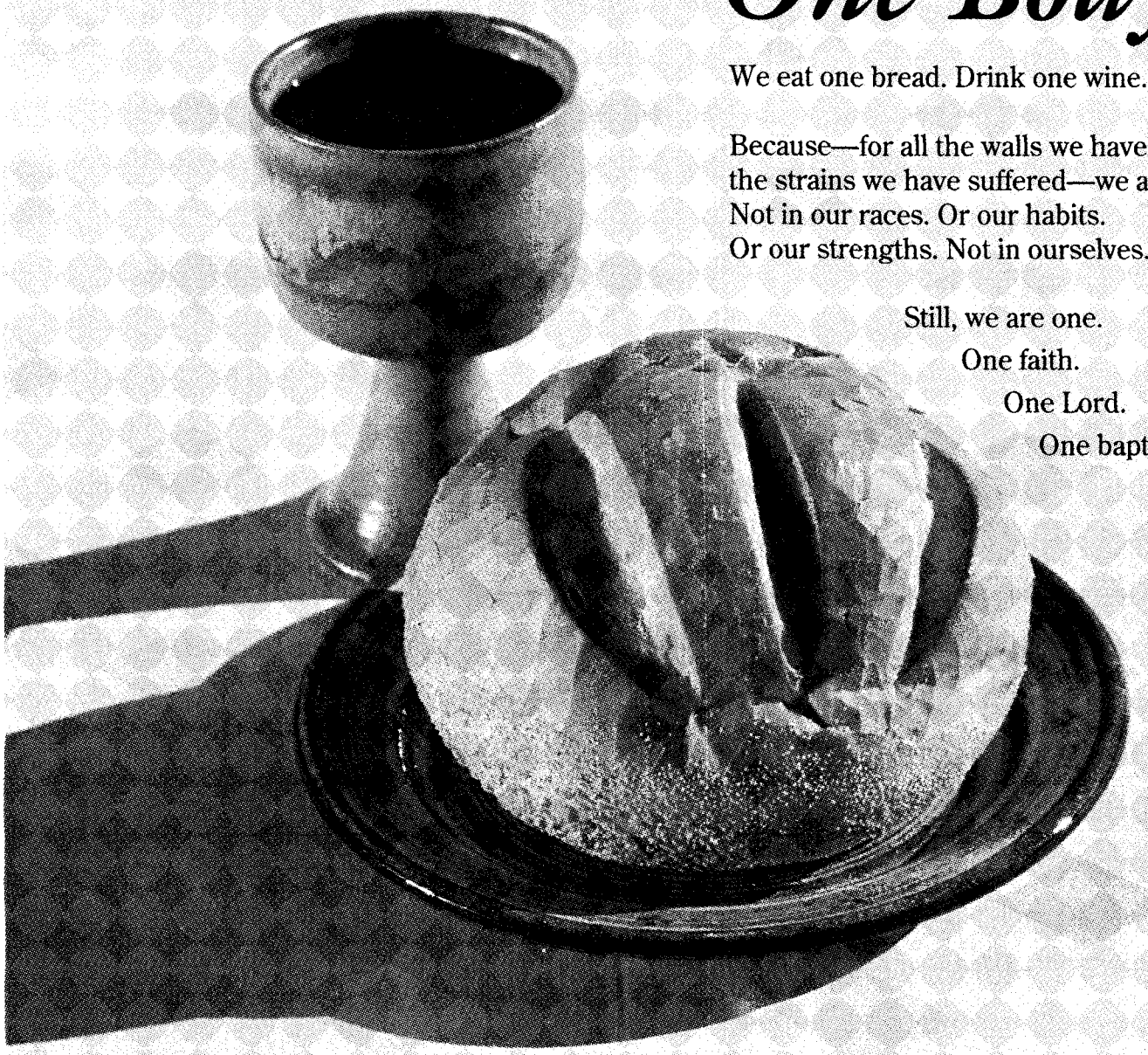
One Body



We eat one bread. Drink one wine.

Because—for all the walls we have built, all
the strains we have suffered—we are one.
Not in our races. Or our habits.
Or our strengths. Not in ourselves.

Still, we are one.
One faith.
One Lord.
One baptism.

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